2

殺人姫と林監学校

十二人

PSYCHOMETRY COMEDY

水城水城

illustration
生煮え

Mizuki Mizu
×
Namanie

PSYCHO LOVE COMEDY

ファミ通文庫

2

殺人姫と
林監学校

Introduction 出発式

「悩みごとなどございましたら、
遠慮なくご相談して
くださいませね？」

「一年生の皆さまが、
少しでも林監学校と
楽しめるように
そして、一日でも早く
更生できるように」

「せっかく二人きりなんだから、
二人きりのときしかできないことを
しに来たんだよォ、京輔？」

Gothic Sick Amplifier

その淑女、シリアルキラーにつき

地獄の一日目

The Murderers of a Purgatory Reincarnation School 2

プルガトリウム更生学院の殺人鬼たち2

黒鈍色の刃が月明かりを浴び、濡れたように光る

「嫌ですわぁ、氷河さん。
殺すつもりだなんて。
まさか、そんな……」

風紀

Knock It On Hell's Door

命短し、殺せよ乙女

続・煉獄の二日目

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Volume 2 - Murderer Princess and Open-Jail School

Departure Ceremony - Introduction

"Hey swine!"

Inside the graffiti-covered interior of the vast gymnasium, a mumbling lolita voice was heard.

Bearing a cute child-like face adorned with a bob-cut, her petite body dressed in a brand-name women's suit, the female teacher--Kurumiya Hijiri--looked down from the stage high above, her round eyes narrowing.

Here, a total of thirty-one boys and girls were standing neatly in formation, looking up at Kurumiya who resemebled a kindergarten or elementary schooler. These students were dressed in tracksuits striped black and white.

" " "Yes!" " "

Vigorous voices sounded in unison in response to Kurumiya's shout.

"After entering our Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation, three months have passed within the blink of an eye. You assholes started as human scum but now you've been disciplined to become much more obedient. Apart from a certain retarded swine showing zero progress--that trash Mohican--no one arrived late today. Excellent. Kukuku... Let's start with roll call."

While saying that, Kurumiya swung the steel pipe she was resting against her shoulder.

The bloody mess adhering to its surface flew and splattered, soiling the boy in the front row--Kyousuke's face.

However, Kyousuke remained completely still, showing absolutely no change in expression.

" " "Thank you very much!" " " As the students hollered loudly, they endured a gaze filled with violence.

Kurumiya scoffed "Hmph" then placed the pipe on her shoulder again.

"However, this is a bit... too boring. Obedience is all very good and all, but excessive docility has betrayed your thoughts! You must be thinking this, eh? Thinking 'as long as I keep my mouth shut and obey', 'as long as I don't show hostility', 'as long as I follow school rules'... You think that's enough to prevent me from schooling you assholes? Nothing is wrong with this attitude. Rather, it should be quite correct. However--"

Instantly, Kurumiya's aura changed.

Her eyes filled with ice-cold rage as though all teasing mirth had disappeared from her body.

"This stance, this way of thinking--Nowhere near thorough enough. You assholes really think... it's okay as long as you XX? Can it with the underestimation, capish? This state of yours is merely superficial submission, it's obvious from a single glance. Looking at me, your eyes... show much less fear and reverence than when you first started the term, I see it clearly! If your reverence towards me decreases, so does your loyalty. Putting on a sheep's skin over yourselves without changing anything in your bones, that can't be said to be true reformation. This time, I will start this 'special activity' like this."

Saying that, Kurumiya took out a B5 sized booklet from somewhere.

On its deep red cover, written in exaggerated letters:

Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation

Guide to the Open-Jail School

Not an open-air school but an open-jail school.

Due to leaving the Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation to set off on a three-day-two-night school trip, Kyousuke and the first-years were gathered in the gymnasium at 5:30 in the morning.

Behind Kyousuke, a certain someone was yawning with sleepy eyes.

"This trip to the open-jail school is for the sake of using a harsh environment to root out your abject natures, already beginning to grow undisciplined having gotten used to school life, so as to plant fear deep into your bones once more, an activity to brand loyalty upon you all. In the three days starting today, leading you swine will be me, the homeroom teacher of Year 1 Class A as well as--"

"Year 1 Class B's homeroom teacher, me, Busujima Kirito."

Interrupting Kurumiya was a drab-looking middle-aged man in a suit.

His jacket was crooked, his shirt creased. Heavy eye bags.

Appearing from the side of the stage, the man--Busujima--ran his hand through his hair and said in a lifeless voice:

"Excuse me, Kurumiya-sensei... My important 'friends' have gone missing. I just spent so much time looking. Oh dear~ Thank goodness I found my friends safe and sound! So, umm... Where was I? Seeing Kurumiya-sensei talking all this time, I felt that I should finish up the rest. You see, in terms of age, Kurumiya-sensei is still my senior. Just leave the rest to me, your junior--"

"--Leading you lot will be me, Year 1 Class A's homeroom teacher as well as the members of the Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation's Discipline Committee. I will drag your asses from start to finish, so prepare yourselves!"

"Oh my, ignoring me? So mean. You even left out mentioning me in your haste just now."

Not only were his objections but even his existence was ignored as well, Busujima grew depressed.

Kurumiya threw Busujima a glance of annoyance then acted as though nothing had happened.

"The Discipline Committee is a committee formed from exemplary upperclassmen--in other words, model inmates. At the open-jail school, they will serve as my hands and feet, to teach and discipline on my behalf. Let's hurry up and get the introductions over with."

--Introducing these Discipline Committee members who will be taking care of you fucking first-years for the next while.

Kurumiya had scarcely finished speaking when...

Uniformed boys and girls appeared from the left side of the stage, opposite to where Busujima had emerged.

They were dressed in the school's prescribed summer attire--short-sleeved shirt plus a vest, striped tie or ribbon, yellow armbands reading "Discipline Committee."

Standing in a row behind Kurumiya, they numbered eight in total.

They included a narrow-eyed, skinny boy and a brawny bloke with bulging muscles. A girl sporting braids and glasses as well as a girl who looked like a female gangster with her skirt reaching down to her ankles.

Making the deepest impression of all was the pretty girl standing on the right end.

Honey-colored long hair with emerald eyes. Her complexion, snow-white to an almost pathological degree, was something one would associate with a porcelain doll of the highest quality. Taking a step forward, the gorgeous girl slowly bowed in a graceful manner.

"Greetings to you all, new students. I am the Discipline Committee Chair, Syamaya Saki from Year 3 Class A of the Purgatorium School of Rehabiliation. I was born overseas but grew up in Japan. My mother was a French-American while my father was pure Japanese. I am seventeen years of age. A pleasure to meet you."

After introducing herself politely, she smiled tenderly.

It felt as though countless flowers were blooming with the beauty--Syamaya--in the center.

Obviously for the boys, but even the girls were staring at her in mesmerization, given how striking the sight was.

Kyousuke could not help but let a "...wow" escape his lips.

Inside this school, packed full of incurable madmen, who knew that it was possible for someone to smile this radiantly? Standing out from the crowd, it felt almost as though the goddess of mercy had descended into hell.

Eyes of emerald, quite removed from the eye colors of the Japanese, they were so beautiful that one could mistake them for gemstones. Further enhanced by the ladylike airs brewing within them, these eyes conveyed a deep impression of a wholesome mind and spirit within.

Furthermore, for some reason, Kyousuke could feel an intimidating aura from the area behind him--

"...Tsk."

Then he heard someone click their tongue in a deliberate manner.

The earlier feeling might have progressed and transformed into murderous intent... But the reason was unclear.

Just as Kyousuke felt confused and flustered, Syamaya's pleasant and unhurried voice reached his ears.

"We of the Discipline Committee will serve our role as Kurumiya-sama's support. However, we have no intention of inflicting any atrocities upon you. In order to let every first-year student enjoy the open-jail school, in order to let everyone be rehabilitated to enter your new life as soon as possible, we offer our sincere efforts. Please do not hesitate to confide in us should you have any problems or troubles."

Facing the smiling Syamaya who was stroking her hair, all of the student's minds were thoroughly snatched away.

No one paid any attention to Busujima, who was squatting on the side of the stage, muttering to himself: "Kurumiya-sama's support... Huh? What about me? Where's my support? Why is everyone ignoring me? ...Isn't this going too far?" What a pitiful teacher.

The entire mood was completely under Syamaya's control.

From down below the stage, Kyousuke's burning gaze accepted Syamaya's extremely attractive smile with great contentment--As much as he wanted to do that, in the next instant...

"Oh, that's right... You first-year assholes must be judging Syamaya ve~~~~~~~~~~~ry much by appearances? After all, she is the macabre serial killer known for her top kill count in the entire year group, shaking the school upon her enrollment by her title of the cruel and atrocious 'Murderer Princess', a problem child among problem children... Kukuku."

Kurumiya's words caused everyone's thoughts to halt.

...Top kill count in the entire year group? Macabre serial killer? What the heck was Kurumiya talking about?

"Greatly varied in killing methods and target types with all sorts of murder scenes, she killed and dismembered serial victims. Without a single point of similarity between any of the cases, it was impossible to conceive them as perpetrated by the same person. The twentieth and twenty-first victims were actually her father and mother. Only after she was arrested on this act of patricide and matricide did it come to light that all those cases were committed by Syamaya alone. Originally thought to be a murderer of two when first arrested, reality proved her to be a rare macabre serial killer who had already killed twenty-one. Including the fact that the murderer was just a little lass who had just reached fourteen years of age, the truth was far too shocking. Hence, it was not released to the public. Buried in obscurity, she was then thrown into this school."

...Wait a sec. What did she say just now? --Twenty-one?

No matter what, that's way too unreal. The false charges framed on Kyousuke, that number of 'twelve victims' killed was already beyond ordinary bounds, yet Syamaya's kill count was almost double. That must have been a joke just now.

The upperclassman with such purity in her eyes, couldn't possibly be the Murderer Princess who had killed twenty-one.

In fact, even Syamaya made a shocked expression.

"This shouldn't be disclosed."

...She admitted it very simply.

The image of Syamaya in Kyousuke's heart, the benevolent upperclassman, the gentle smile, everything was shattered beyond repair.

All the other students were the same, clutching their chests in despair, clutching their heads in despair, even clutching a left arm and screaming "Gwahhhhhhhhhhh!? Settle down! Settle down, Azrael!" Quite shocked.

Behind Kyousuke, a grumble of "...Serves you right, jerk" could be heard.

Syamaya took out a microphone and spoke louder than the commotion.

"Well... Everyone, please quiet down! P-Please calm down! Indeed, I have killed twenty-one people in the past using various means. This is absolutely true. -- HOW.EVER! I have already changed, I have been reborn! Even someone like me with that sort of past has become a noble lady! Thanks to the teachers... No, all thanks to Kurumiya-sama's strict disciplining, my body and mind has been thoroughly cleansed anew!"

Syamaya's eyes were glimmering brightly while she spoke fervently with her hand against her chest.

Busujima, who had vanished off the stage without anyone noticing, suddenly remarked "...you already said 'teachers' openly and clearly, why did you have to

correct yourself so deliberately? Are you bullying me?" But probably, no one cared.

Kurumiya watched mischievously as Syamaya desperately tried to explain herself.

On the other hand, the other Discipline Committee members remained completely unfazed.

Still standing with their backs straight, facing forward, they stood absolutely still without blinking.

Looking like artificial sculptures, they emitted a terrifying sense of pressure.

"So everyone, please do not worry! No matter how many you have killed in the past... You can always repent! Shouldering your crimes, continuing to move forward, this is entirely possible! Indeed... No matter how many more you have killed, you can still grasp that sliver of light."

--Just at this moment, suddenly...

Kyousuke and Syamaya's gaze met.

"...!?"

As Kyousuke jumped in surprise, Syamaya smiled and narrowed her emerald-green eyes.

Her gentle expression seemed to be saying the following:

'Worry not, Kamiya-san. If even someone like me who had killed twenty-one was able to be reborn, surely you can be reformed completely! Let's do our best together, shall we?'

"..."

Evading Syamaya's burning gaze, Kyousuke instantly felt drained of energy.

Then "Isn't that nice? How popular you are" could be heard from behind.

Annoyed, Kyousuke looked back only to see a beautiful girl with rust-red hair and rust-red eyes pouting.

"...Yawn." She deliberately yawned.

The Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation--An unusual boarding school where juvenile convicted murderers were gathered.

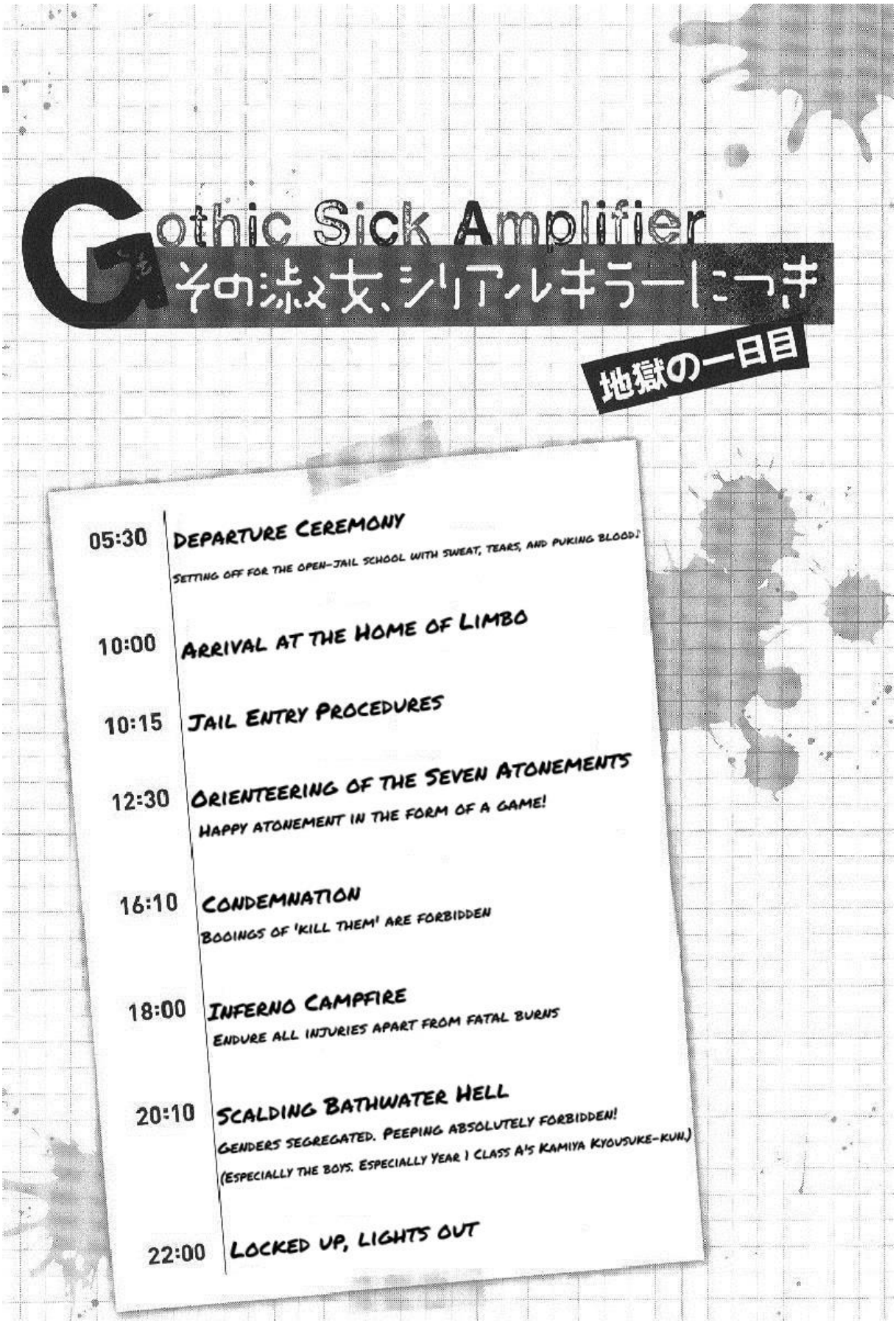
For Kyousuke, framed with false charges as the 'Mass Murderer of Twelve' and forced to enroll in this school, there seemed to be no time for even his soul to take a breather.

Framed with this crime, all sorts of weirdos were approaching him without end.

Thus, the three-day-two-night trip to the open-jail school commenced.

This seems like it'll turn into some kind of utter pain in the ass again--overcome with heartfelt emotion, Kyousuke was already sighing at the sky.

Day 1 Hell - Following the Leadership of that Lady and Serial Killer / "Gothic Sick Amplifier"


Gothic Sick Amplifier
その淑女、シリアルキラーにつき
地獄の一日目
05:30 DEPARTURE CEREMONY
SETTING OFF FOR THE OPEN-JAIL SCHOOL WITH SWEAT, TEARS, AND PUKING BLOOD!
10:00 ARRIVAL AT THE HOME OF LIMBO
10:15 JAIL ENTRY PROCEDURES
12:30 ORIENTEERING OF THE SEVEN ATONEMENTS
HAPPY ATONEMENT IN THE FORM OF A GAME!
16:10 CONDEMNATION
BOOINGS OF 'KILL THEM' ARE FORBIDDEN
18:00 INFERNO CAMPFIRE
ENDURE ALL INJURIES APART FROM FATAL BURNS
20:10 SCALDING BATHWATER HELL
GENDERS SEGREGATED. PEEPING ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN!
(ESPECIALLY THE BOYS. ESPECIALLY YEAR 1 CLASS A'S KAMIYA KYOUSUKE-KUN.)
22:00 LOCKED UP, LIGHTS OUT

The Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation was a full boarding school built on a remote island in the middle of the sea.

Absolutely impossible to leave ordinarily, apart from the school grounds enclosed in concrete walls and fencing, the island was a vast zone of flourishing vegetation and forests. Amidst the greenery occupying their view, there was a trodden path in the forest where Kyousuke and others were panting as they ran, advancing. Carrying heavy backpacks, their destination was the open-jail school's dorm facilities--'Home of Limbo.'

"Hurry hurry hurry hurry hurry hurry! Move your asses, stupid swine! Any piece of trash who moves slower than me will be rewarded with a scorching~ lash! Run along, run along, run until you puke blood!!"

Swinging the steel pipe randomly at the tail end of the group, Kurumiya was herding the students.

Pulling forward to create enough distance, Kyousuke ran while looking at the backs of the Discipline Committee members in front of him.

The four of them were running nonstop with full composure.

No signs of Committee Chair Syamaya could be found among them.

The rest of the members were probably behind Kyousuke's Year 1 Class A, together with Year 1 Class B's homeroom teacher. Feeling relieved about Syamaya's temporary absence, Kyousuke exhaled but he still whispered:

"That Committee Chair, killing twenty-one people is really terrible... Does that make her the school's number one?"

"...Makes sense. Even if you consider the entire world, murderers with that kill count probably can be numbered with the fingers of both hands."

As soon as Kyousuke spoke, someone responded immediately. The girl with the swaying rust-red ponytail, Akabane Eiri was running next to him, her mouth upturned in a frown.

"...And furthermore, she's a serial killer, you know? It would be understandable for a mass murderer or a spree killer. But to have something like twenty-one victims killed serially, you could probably count cases on one hand."

—There were apparently three types of murderers, based on what Eiri was saying.

First there were mass murderers, which meant someone who had murdered a great number of people all at once in one location. This is the same type of crime as shooting massacres as well as what Kyousuke was framed with.

Then there were spree killers, which meant someone who had killed victims at two or more locations within a short period of time. Named spree in the sense of carefree indulgence, crimes tend to be one-off occasions. In most cases, targets were indiscriminate.

Finally, there were serial killers, referring to people who commit multiple homicides without restriction in method. After committing murder after murder, culprits would stay hidden in society, continuing to live normal lives.

Serial killers were often marked by mental illness with unusual fetishes or macabre interests. In the majority of cases, there were commonalities in both the victims and the methods they were killed. Although the shorter the interval between murders, the easier it was to get caught, compared to mass murderers and spree killers, the kill counts of serial killers tended to be much lower.

"However, that girl committed crimes lacking connections between them, making it very difficult for investigations to progress... Besides, the crimes were all committed very rationally. I'm still half-convinced regarding the fact a girl like her had killed twenty-one people. She's clearly about the same age as me and an amateur to boot—"

Saying that, Eiri gripped her backpack's straps.

On the surface, Eiri was treated as the "Murderer of Six" but in actual fact, she was a professional killer, an assassin, who had yet to murder anyone. Given the massive gap between her title and her true self, for Eiri who could not bring herself to kill others, it was probably difficult for her to understand Syamaya who

had killed twenty-one victims despite coming from an ordinary upbringing. Eiri's eyes showed the glint of doubt, fear, jealousy and admiration.

Kyousuke tried his best to sound cheerful in an attempt to help Eiri's spirits.

"H-However! She's already completely rehabilitated, so there's no problem, right?"

"If only that were true..."

Eiri fell silent after giving a brief answer.

A superb song of cicadas calling nonstop madly rained down from the green canopy above.

"...Say, Kyousuke."

After running silently for a while, Eiri spoke up again.

Feeling some kind of gaze, Kyousuke looked beside him.

"...What's wrong?"

Eiri had her eyes narrowed at him. Beneath those half-closed eyelids, Eiri's eyes seemed full of resentment.

"I'm talking about you. At the departure ceremony, you were falling head over heels over that girl, right?"

"Eh? What head over heels, what do you mean... by that?"

Kyousuke was surprised by the nonchalant question and asked frantically in return. Eiri bit her lip and said:

"...Nothing much, it's just a feeling... that Kyousuke is a pervert who can get aroused even if the other person is a psycho murderer of twenty-one, as long as she's pretty."

"No, hold on a sec, I didn't know any better at the very start, okay? Had I known that this upperclassman had killed twenty-one people, no matter what, I wouldn't have—"

"I see. In other words, you were infatuated with her from the very start... Yes, now I know."

The rust-red eyes narrowed. Kyousuke felt cold sweat being squeezed out of his forehead.

"A loaded question!? No wait, it's because... Don't you agree? She looks so pretty and acts so gentle, I should put it this way, all guys, no matter who, would find her a refreshing sight and even start heart racing or stuff—"

"......Is that so?"

Eiri's eyes narrowed even further, filled with dangerous light.

Cold sweat gushed out of Kyousuke's forehead, producing a dripping flow downwards.

"...W-What?"

"Nothing."

Eiri turned her gaze away nonchalantly and sped up, getting ahead of Kyousuke who was originally beside her, rushing to the front rapidly on her own.

While leaving, she seemed to be murmuring something like "hmph... so Kyousuke is that kind of person... I see" but Kyousuke could barely hear anything.

"She's probably muttering 'just go die already.' What the heck is she getting pissed off for?"

Just as Kyousuke was watching Eiri getting farther and farther away, puzzling...

"Huff... Huff... Hee... Hee... No more... I can't run anymore~~~~!"

Another girl caught up to him, almost out of breath.

Slightly wavy chestnut-brown hair. Igarashi Maina.

Her slender arms were flailing haphazardly, already out of strength.

"Huff, huff, hee... Huff, huff, heeeeee... Ze..."

In this state, let alone speaking, even her breathing was about to stop.

Kyousuke smiled wryly and slowed down.

"You look like you're suffering, Maina. I'll run with you, so hang in there!"

"Eh!? Oh, o-okay... Thank you so much! Hee... Huff..."

Her suffering expression relaxed to show a smile, but soon went back to suffering again.

Maina panted hoarsely while waving her limbs desperately.

She hungered for oxygen, breathing as hard as she could, resulting in breathing difficulty.

"Oh... It's bad if you breathe too hard, you know? I think you should've heard of the Lamaze method, the one for childbirth. Just do it like that, rhythmically—"

"Hee, hee, hoo~ ...hee, hee, hoo~"

"Ohoh, not bad at all! That's the feeling, hee, hee, hoo~!"

"Hee, hee, hoo~ ...hee, hee, hoo~"

"Push, push! Hang in there, Maina, hee, hee, hoo~"

"Hee, hee, hoo~ Oh no, the baby's coming out!"

"What the fuck!?"

"Hey, you two over there! What the fuck are you yammering on about!? If you have time to move your lips then move those legs of yours! Do you want me to shove this thing into your lips down there!!? You don't believe I'll traumatize you!? Believe it!!!!"

Just at this moment, Kurumiya's angry roars were heard.

Kyousuke realized that he had slowed down quite a lot. Looking back, he could see Kurumiya not far away behind, raising her pipe and throwing a tantrum. "Eeeeeek!?" Maina jumped in fright.

"Noooooooooooooooooooooooooo!? Have mercy on me! Even if it's just my virginity, please have mercy on me!!!"

As though trying to escape Kurumiya's demonic grasp, Maina screamed out of control while suddenly speeding up.

Kicking up a storm of twigs, leaves and pebbles scattered along the forest path, Maina raced past Eiri who was looking back in surprise. Just as Maina was about to surpass the upperclassmen of the Discipline Committee in the front...

"Uwahhhhhhhhhh!"

--She fell over violently.

Almost caught up into it, the female gangster-looking Committee member yelled "Woah.. W-What the heck!?" and jumped. On the other side, the other students from the class made "...here we go again" expressions on their surprised faces while taking a look at the fallen Maina and running past her.

"Umm... Y-You okay!?"

"Hey... Are you alright!?"

Kyousuke and Eiri hurried over to Maina's side. Maina groaned "uuuuuu..." while pushing herself up.

Patting dust off her face, Maina went "...Y-Yeah. I'm fine... So filthy."

Then she was just about to start running again when--

"Owwie!? It really hurts... The skin's scraped. Owwie owwie."

Holding the knee of the right leg she had stepped out with, Maina suddenly stopped. Her eyes grew moist.

Seeing a tiny wound on Maina's face, Kyousuke--

"...Here we go."

"Awawa!? Kyousuke-kun!? W-W-W-W-What, what are you doing?"

"Hmm? Oh, nothing much... I just think this'll be easier. Am I meddling too much?"

Using a princess carry, Kyousuke had scooped up Maina in his arms and started running in this manner.

Frightened, Maina curled herself into a ball.

"Ah, no... U-Umm... It's not meddling, but... It'll be tough for you if you do this, Kyousuke-kun? U-Umm... I must be heavy, right? Awawa."

Talking randomly, Maina was blushing to her ears.

Seeing Maina embarrassed, Kyousuke smiled.

"Don't worry, you're not heavy at all. I'm quite confident in my stamina after all. This is nothing more than running with a girl in my arms, no problem. As long as you don't mind, Maina."

"......!?"

Maina's eyes were widened to the point of being circular. She looked downwards, twisting her body in Kyousuke's arms as though ticklish, saying shyly "I-I don't mind."

Kyousuke smiled and gently adjusted Maina in his arms, trying to control the shaking as much as possible, sprinting along the forest path that was not easy to walk. Maina looked up at Kyousuke in trepidation with a pleading look.

"Umm, uh... Thank you vewwy much!"

"Not at all. I am the group leader after all, so helping fellow members is only part of my duty."

"....."

Ever since Kyousuke picked up Maina in his arms, Eiri had remained coldly silent all along.

Together with Eiri and Maina, as well as a a certain member of a trio of boys who had been inhumanely exterminated at the very beginning for picking a fight with Kurumiya early in the morning, Kyousuke was in Class A's Team 4.

"Say, Eiri. What the heck are you so pissed off for?"

"...Huh? I'm not pissed off. Just go die already."

"I-Isn't this being pissed...? What the fuck, do you want to be carried too?"

"I-Impossible, pervert! H-How ridiculous can you get!?"

Eiri's sleepy eyes were completely open as she snarled in anger, racing past Kyousuke and Maina. From the receding image of her back, Kyousuke could see an extraordinary aura of resentment being released.

"J-Just kidding... You don't have to look at me like I'm a bug."

"Awawa. Sorry, Eiri-chan..."

"Why are you apologizing, Maina?"

"Ehhhhhh!? Oh... N-Nothing! Nothing at all!"

Maina frantically shook her head. Kyousuke felt more and more puzzled.

Ever since enrolling in the Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation, three months had passed within the blink of an eye—

Kyousuke felt that Maina's side was basically settled, but every now and then, Eiri seemed even more offensive than before.

Clearly having no memory of offending her at all, Kyousuke felt totally mind boggled.

(Could it be... She's disliking me?)

Staring at Eiri who was running nonstop on her own in a corner of the forest path, Kyousuke scratched the back of his head.

It was currently early July. Despite the gradually rising temperatures, only Eiri's ice-cold attitude towards Kyousuke did not show any signs of warming up.

× × ×

It was half an hour after they set off from the Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation.

In an open clearing in the outdoors, they took a short break.

According to what was written in the guidebook, they still had to run for almost two and a half more hours. One could not help but suspect if this was a roundabout route, almost endless.

Putting down his backpack, Kyousuke plopped himself on the ground to sit down.

Having started running on her own again along the way, Maina also sat down on the spot in exhaustion.

As though going "Huff... Hee... So tired. The path is getting tougher and tougher", she wiped her sweat with a pink handkerchief. Among them, only Eiri looked cool and refreshed.

"...This island turns out to be far bigger than imagined. Apart from the school, it seems to have other facilities."

She was looking around at the surrounding woodland with great interest.

Born in a family of assassins, Eiri had undergone strict training since early childhood. This level of physical exertion was apparently nothing to her. There was not the slightest trace of sweat on her well-proportioned face.

As for why an assassin like Eiri would be imprisoned at this school for convicted murderers--

This involved the Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation's true purpose as a school for professional killers, aiming to cultivate convicted murderers into hitmen. Even if they managed to graduate, students would be sent to the underbelly of society rather than returning to the normal world.

--However, the majority of students were unaware of that.

For these murderers with twisted personalities, thoroughly correcting and reforming them was probably the top priority. Even Kyousuke, who was told the truth by Eiri three months ago, had been issued a strict gag order by Kurumiya.

Hence, Eiri had only told Maina about herself being "an assassin unable to strike the killing blow" without revealing the truth of the school. In other words, among the first-year students, only three of them currently knew the truth. Namely, Kyousuke, Eiri, as well as--

"Guess who!?"

Someone suddenly hugged Kyousuke from behind with a squish.

The bulge pressing on his back was very soft, priding in its overwhelming volume.

By his ear came a strange breathing noise of "foosh". Kyousuke answered with some level of stiffness.

"Do I need to ask...? It's Renko, right?"

"Is this your final answer?"

"Yeah yeah yeah, final answer."

"..."

"..."

"...Correct answer! So correct, Kyousuke~ Amazing, you answered without needing to think! As your reward, I'll give you my muskmelons. Because there's a gas mask, it's muskmelon, get it? The best quality, you know? And there's two of them too, oh? Bon appetit. They're so sweet that your sanity will be destroyed."

As soon as she finished speaking, the pouncing girl--Hikawa Renko--pressed her voluptuous bosom against him.

Pouring strength into her arms hugging him, squish squish...

"Go and die."

Instantly, Eiri took off her backpack and swung it over.

"Uwah!?"

Renko dodged swiftly. Kyousuke was struck in the eyeball by a metal clasp.

"My eye! My fucking eye arghhhhhhhhh!?"

"...Tsk, dodged huh. How displeasing. Disappear already, giant tits."

Ignoring Kyousuke who was rolling all over the ground, covering his eye, Eiri glared at Renko with annoyance.

In contrast, Renko--the girl wearing the pitch-black gas mask--sighed with a "foosh..." from her ventilator, shrugging pretentiously.

"Telling me to 'go die' and 'disappear already'... That's so mean. Does this mean that girls with small chests have equally small hearts with no room for generosity? So that's why you've always been so flat, I see."

As though flaunting her victory, Renko puffed out her bulging chest, still extremely conspicuous despite the looseness of her gym outfit, while talking about Eiri's, that flat chest.

Veins bulged on Eiri's forehead.

"Girls with large busts also seem to be very conceited too. Should I help you lose weight by slicing those obstructing lumps of fat? Get on a diet, fatty."

"Amazing! I'm not fat at all. Because I'm defined by much more than my boobs. Look at that tight, narrow waist, those beautiful legs of ivory, they're all superior to yours, Eiri!"

"...Huh!? Apart from boobs, do you really think I lose to you in any other place? How delightful, retard. All your nutrients are sucked up by the boobs, so your brain can't even function."

"Awawawawa. Please calm down, you two!"

"That's right, calm down... Also, how about someone caring about me?"

Maina was at a total loss what to do, looking back and forth between Renko and Eiri who were glaring at each other.

Patting dirt off his body and getting up, Kyousuke grumbled.

"Kyousuke!" Renko suddenly cried out, her bosom wobbling as she ran towards him.

"Are you okay!? Just now, you protected me..."

"Yeah right. It's your fault for dodging and making me eat that backpack!"

"...Yeah, thank you. I knew it, Kyousuke is so kind to me, I love Kyousuke!"

"Listen when others are speaking!!"

Is she focused on listening to her music as usual...?

From those rugged black headphones, faint noises were also currently leaking out.

"...By the way, what're you doing here? Is it okay for you to ditch your own class during breakfast?"

Kyousuke pushed the clingy Renko away and asked.

Renko nodded "yes" then pointed at the gaps between the trees.

"I found a great place nearby. It's a rare chance, like having breakfast with you, just the two of us. Wanna eat my melons? Just think of them as dessert after the meal. Foosh."

"Shut up! Like hell anyone wants to be alone with you!"

Kyousuke yelled, sighing from the bottom of his heart.

This gas mask girl--Renko--was the being created for the sake of murder.

Once her limiter of a mask was taken off, she would become the killing machine that associated all emotions with the act of killing. But the only thing was that she absolutely could not kill Kyousuke.

--So long as Kyousuke did not respond to Renko's love.

Because of that, attempting to make Kyousuke fall in love with her, Renko had been engaging in outrageous skin contact and seduction behavior numerous times over the past three months, taking aggressive action.

If Kyousuke gave in to sweet seduction and spent time alone with Renko, finally letting her take his virginity by force, falling in love with her seductive body... Perhaps she would go with the flow and take his life as well.

Despite wearing a gas mask twenty-four hours a day, her true appearance was that of an impossibly beautiful girl.

...So yeah.

"That's right, stop talking nonsense! In that case, I'm coming too. Even if you're planning something, I'm not going to let you make a move on Kyousuke... I won't let you kill Kyousuke, absolutely not."

Kyousuke was very glad for Eiri's intervention.

"Shuko..." Enduring Eiri's harsh glare, Renko slumped her shoulders.

"Hmm... You're getting in my way again, Eiri? Find as many excuses as you like, but I knew it, you're targeting Kyousuke too... Oh well, whatever. There will be many chances. Then let's all have a lovey-dovey breakfast party together this morning! Okay, everyone, come with me."

Like switching modes, Renko clapped her hands, turned around and started walking forward.

"Huh? Like hell I'm targeting him," murmured Eiri while glaring at Renko's back.

"I'd think so too. Being targeted could end up getting me killed."

Kyousuke smiled wryly and concurred with Eiri, but only received a disdainful look for his efforts.

"...We're not talking about lives here, blockhead."

He even got scolded in the end. Eiri walked away in dejection, following after Renko.

"B-Blockhead... Come again? I guess she really hates me."

"Auau. It's okay, Eiri-chan..."

"No wait, I'm the one who needs to be comforted, right? Why are you comforting Eiri?"

"Eh!? Ah, umm... N-Nuthin' at all! Nuthin' at all! U-Umm... Let's go too!? We're being left behind!"

While waving her hand, Maina bit her tongue and chased after Renko and Eiri like she was escaping.

"Ah... Hey! What the heck, those girls... Jeez."

Left all alone, Kyousuke frowned, scratched his head and put on his backpack once again.

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Renko led them to a stream flowing in the forest.

The riverbank had massive boulders while the gently flowing stream water was very clear.

"Wow... I can't believe you were able to find this kind of place."

"Foosh. I know right? I found it by following animal trails, so I guess it must be hard to discover."

Just as Renko pointed out, although it only took a five minute walk to get here, there were no signs of people around.

This was truly a great place where they could be free and unfettered.

"Great. Then let's start eating decisively! I haven't eaten anything since early morning."

"Yeah. My tummy is growling... Where should we eat?"

"...How about those boulders over there? Looks pretty nice."

Deciding on the location, Kyousuke and the others were just about to make their way there when...

"Hmm~, the mask really does get in the way a lot. Strip, strip..."

Throwing down her backpack, Renko slowly started to take off her clothes.

Grabbing the hem of her gym shirt, she pulled it up without hesitation.

" " "....." " "

--This girl, what the heck is she doing so suddenly?

Just as Kyousuke and the others were staring speechlessly, Renko finished taking off her gym clothes.

With her back to the glimmering stream, she went "hmph" and puffed out her chest.

"Tada~~~~~~~~~~~~ How's that? My sexy swimsuit look!"

Dressed in a black bikini, her body was on generous display.

Reflecting light under the summer sun, her pale skin was like porcelain. Legs of ivory tracing out elegant lines. Adorning the tight and narrow waist, an adorable belly button.

Then most striking of all was the massive burgeoning bust.

Looking as though they might fall down any moment, those breasts were not something that a bikini's skimpy fabric could hide and were exposed to a very high degree. The deep valley formed between the breasts was absolutely beyond imagination. Due to the slender lines of her overall body, her bust's presence was further emphasized. "Foosh. I guess everyone is staring in shock. My boobs are too deadly, bewitching you all in an instant? Oh dear~ I guess I'm really carrying scary murder weapons!"

Renko declared proudly, placing her hands in front of her chest. Looking at her face, Kyousuke whispered:

"...If there weren't a gas mask, this would be it."

The scorching sensation running amok in his body from gazing at Renko's body was rapidly cooled as soon as he caught sight of the repulsive gas mask covering her face.

Kyousuke was liberated from "stiffness" in various meanings but completely drained of energy. Renko cried out "Ehhhhh!?" at him, quite taken aback. Making a pose leaning forward, she tried to emphasize her bust.

"Come look quick~, boobs! Boobs here~! Giant giant boobs~"

Then she made a series of sexy poses. Crossing her arms behind her head, putting her hands in between her breasts, shaking that seductive bosom...

" " "---" " "

"...Shuko... Shuko... W-Why...? Why aren't you bewitched by me!? I already tried so hard, that's so mean... Goosh."

In front of Kyousuke and the others who were making no reaction, Renko panted heavily and collapsed on her knees dejectedly.

Kyousuke placed his hand on her trembling shoulder lightly.

"Well... That's because you're wearing a gas mask."

The instant Kyousuke spoke softly, Renko's trembling suddenly stopped.

Supporting herself with her hands on the riverbank, Renko hung her head low, then fell silent after going "shuko..." once.

"Awawa. U-Umm... Don't let it get to you, Renko-chan!"

"Serves you right, useless boobs! Those prided breasts of yours only go so far, ultimately."

Maina tried her best to console Renko while Eiri mocked triumphantly.

Feeling pity for Renko, Kyousuke coughed dryly "...Ahem."

"Well, basically... I think your boobs are definitely very powerful, you know? Not only large but their shapes are beautiful, very soft, full of elasticity... Filled with charm, wanna do messy things to them. That's the kind of boobs they are, I think. So cheer up, Renko. --Okay?"

"...Pervert." "There's a Mr. Pervert here!" "Pervert!!!!"

"Huh?"

Kyousuke's attempt to praise Renko ended up causing the three girls to join forces in denouncing him.

Among them, Eiri's eyes were exceptionally cold and terrifying.

"Are those your true feelings? Absolutely the worst. Makes me despise you from the bottom of my heart."

"....."

--Several minutes later.

Kyousuke was sitting on the river bank with his knees drawn to his chest, stuffing himself with rice balls.

While desperately wiping the tears flowing from his eyes, tasting the salty rice, Kyousuke saw...

"Want dessert?"

"--Pfft!?"

Suddenly, giant boobs clad in a black bikini flew into view.

Rice spurted out from Kyousuke's mouth, soiling those voluptuous peaks.

"Ejected, you ejected a lot."

"Stop saying weird things while pretending to be embarrassed! By this point, what are you still doing...?"

His hurt feelings unable to heal, Kyousuke pouted and stared at her disdainfully.

Then the gas mask immediately flew over.

Scratching her face while going "foosh", Renko sat down next to Kyousuke.

"Sorry sorry. I was wondering if you're depressed so I came over to have a look. I'm really sorry for just now. You actually made me very happy but I had to go along with the mood and follow everyone."

"...What the fuck kind of mood. Thanks to that, my breakfast is ruined, you bitch."

Eiri and Maina were sitting on the boulders slightly farther away from Kyousuke, eating harmoniously together.

Perhaps noticing Kyousuke's gaze, Eiri looked over then swiftly turned away.

Renko laughed "oh my oh my" awkwardly.

"Looks like she thoroughly hates you, Kyousuke."

"And whose fault do you think it is...? Sheesh, how are you gonna make it up to me?"

Renko pressed her body against Kyousuke while he was face palming.

"You want me to make it up to you...? How do you want me to make it up to you?"

"...Huh?"

"You said it yourself, right, wanting to make a mess out of me... Go ahead, okay? I wanna get messed up too... I want you to mess me up and I want to mess you up too."

"Eh? No, h-hold on, Renko! What are you doing so suddenly--"

"Anything you want. Foosh. As long as you want it, anything at all."

Circling around to the front, Renko climbed onto Kyousuke's legs.

As though forcing Kyousuke to lean back, she leaned forward.

"...Oh. Speaking of which, my boobs got dirty. Because you're the one who made them dirty, Kyousuke, you have to clean them up... Take responsibility, will you?"

Placing her hand on Kyousuke's shoulder, she brought her rice-covered breasts in front of Kyousuke's face.

Because the gas mask went out of view, this scenery was pure destructive force with superlative effect.

"E-Even if you ask me to clean it up... How?"

"However you wish. Wipe it with a handkerchief, pick it off with your fingers, lick it with your tongue, just take advantage of the situation to do this and that, no problem."

"....."

"Okay, it's decided, right? There's no one looking right now. Even if you grope my breasts, no one will kill you. Don't reject a girl's invitation, okay? ...Just enjoy to your heart's content."

Faced with Renko's sweet seduction, Kyousuke gulped.

If it was just groping breasts, that probably would not count as "falling in love with her" and he was not going to get slaughtered, right? A rare chance. Just a little bit... While taking off the rice, just a little bit--

"...Ara? What a splendid location this is."

Just at this moment, a certain gentle, beautiful and familiar voice was heard.

His hand reaching out towards Renko's chest, Kyousuke turned to look at the source in surprise.

At the entrance to the trail leading to the riverbank--

"What a shame, had I discovered this place earlier, I could have had breakfast here comfortably... Flourishing greenery, soothing sounds of water. It would further purify my soul that was cleansed to begin with."

A girl with honey-colored hair, dressed in uniform, was standing there.

Curves in all the right places, slender where it counted, an outstanding figure, a beauty rivaling the likes of Eiri and Renko. A yellow armband was worn on her slender arm.

"Chair of the Discipline Committee... Syamaya Saki, upperclassman."

As though reacting to the words leaking out of Kyousuke's lips, the girl--Syamaya--walked over to him.

Her elegant, oval eyes widened at the sight of Renko leaning forward in her bikini plus gas mask getup, as well as Kyousuke still frozen with his hand reaching for Renko's breast.

Instantly, Syamaya's calm eyes narrowed viciously.

"What are you two doing in this sort of place, may I ask?"

"N-Nothing... Umm, basically--"

"Basically this and that and that~ kind of thing!"

"Yeah, that's right! We were just about to enjoy dessert... No that's completely WRONG!!!"

"----"

Renko raised her hand eagerly. Drawn into the flow by her vigor, Kyousuke frantically retorted at the last second.

In contrast, Syamaya was expressionless. Because she was as beautiful as a doll, it further accentuated how terrifying she looked.

Suffering her straight and direct gaze, Kyousuke felt sweat breaking out of his sweat pores all over his body.

"It's not like that, actually... Because there's a river nearby, we wanted to enter the water to play for a bit after breakfast... After running such a long trail, we've sweated so much... Hahaha."

Seeing Kyousuke frantically patch up his excuses, Syamaya closed her eyes.

Then "...hooh", she exhaled.

Her lowered eyelids raised up again, she looked at Kyousuke again.

"What, ufufu... So that is what's going on here? I was thinking surely you were harboring obscene thoughts while groping this gas masked girl's breasts, ●● then putting ●●● into the ●● to play an indecent mammary game! If it were just my misunderstanding, then that would be truly wonderful... Wonderful. I am embarrassed to say, please excuse me. Ufufufufu."

Speaking a series of obscenities in an elegant tone of voice, she covered her mouth with her hand and smiled.

" "....." "

Kyousuke and Renko were speechless, watching the giggling Syamaya.

It felt like an extremely exaggerated smell of explosives was coming from the upperclassman with the gentle and pure airs. This was probably an illusion.

"...Ara? It's almost about time to set off again. Please don't be late. The open-jail school's itinerary is precise to the nearest minute... Understood? Then I shall be

taking my leave. If there is time, let us take more time to chat later. You are Kamiya Kyousuke-san of Year 1 Class A, yes? Have a nice day."

"...!?"

Kyousuke had not introduced himself but Syamaya called out his full name, took a bow and returned along the path she came from.

Gazing at the elegant figure, gradually disappearing in the distance, Kyousuke was unable to move. Beside him, Renko went "shuko..." and held her arms akimbo.

"Seriously. You've got to rein yourself in. How popular with girls can you get, Kyousuke? I don't like having more and more rivals... Oh well, but that's what makes you worth conquering. Please look forward to our three days and two nights at the open-jail school. Foosh."

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After the break, they ran for roughly two hours without stopping.

Passing through treacherous mountain paths after the woodland trail, their long journey finally arrived at the Home of Limbo, a small-scale concentration camp standing silently in the middle of nature.

After a group photo at the Discipline Plaza, everyone was transferred to the Detaining Hall.

Then finishing the simple Jail Entry Ceremony, they entered their rooms--more precisely, their cells--to put down their clothing and other luggage. There were shared rooms and single rooms. Kyousuke's was a single.

Basically the same as the student dormitories, these rooms only carried the minimum necessary facilities. Kyousuke sat down on the simple mattress bed, casually flipping through the open-jail school's booklet.

Opening the few pages of these three days' itinerary, his face began to frown.

"Next is lunch and... 'Orienteering of the Seven Atonements'? What the heck's that? There's also this 'Inferno Campfire', this 'Scalding Bathwater Hell', this 'Heart Attack Courage Test', this 'Scorching Barbecue'--Hmm, forget it. Just reading it is depressing."

Kyousuke closed the booklet and lay down on bed. Having ran treacherous mountain paths in one go, his body was reeling from the strain, almost about to fall asleep as soon as he lay down...

"Excuse me. May I ask if Kamiya Kyousuke-san's room is over on this side?"

Just as Kyousuke's consciousness was about to go black...

A familiar, elegant voice blew all his drowsiness away.

"...!?"

Kyousuke frantically bounced up and looked at the door.

Across the black, dull bars of iron, the expected person--Syamaya Saki--was standing there.

Her eyes of emerald, adorned by long lashes, met with Kyousuke's gaze.

--Instantly.

"E...E-E-E-E-Exhibitionist!! Utterly shameless!!!!"

He watched as Syamaya's face went flush red and she screamed.

"Huh!? N-No! I took off my gym clothes because they're soaking with sweat--"

"Don't bother with excuses. Hurry and put your clothes on first! This is too defiling a sight!"

"Oh... O-Okay... I'm really sorry."

Feeling hurt from Syamaya's accusations, Kyousuke looked for a shirt.

Soaked with sweat after running for long periods of time, Kyousuke had casually removed the top of his gym uniform, exposing his upper torso. Taking out his uniform from the enamel bag by the bed, he put it on.

After buttoning the shirt from top to bottom, Kyousuke said:

"...I'm done. Sorry for defiling your eyes, Senpai."

Syamaya took away her fingers that were covering her eyes and breathed a sigh of relief.

"W-What an unexpected surprise assault... Who could have expected you to aim for a heart attack on first sight. S-Shameless and underhanded... Are you trying to shock me to death!?"

"I-I'm really sorry... I'll pay more attention next time. Honestly."

Despite Kyousuke's ongoing apologies, he was still quite displeased. No matter what, descriptions like 'defiling sight' and 'shameless and underhanded' were way out of line...

"Say, do you know me, Senpai? I don't remember introducing myself."

"What? Oh, excuse me... I have heard about your exploits a long time ago. No matter what, locking twelve women in an empty warehouse, slaughtering them without mercy using all sorts of methods, even raping the corpses--"

"Did not happen! The ones I did were all men, they're men!"

Although he had not killed anyone in actual fact, it was important to deny wrong rumors.

Then Syamaya's tensed expression relaxed.

"What, so all of the victims were men... Eh? Men? Oh--You... d-did members of the same sex!? You're h-h-h-h-homosexual!!!?"

"Of course not! That's totally not what I mean!!!"

Kyousuke retorted as hard as he could against the trembling Syamaya whose face had gone livid.

--This chick, what's up with her? Does she have a screw loose somewhere?

With all this ruckus on first sight, Kyousuke felt thoroughly exhausted by his vehement denials. Adjusting himself, Kyousuke asked:

"So... Can I ask why you've gone out of your way to visit me, Senpai?"

"...What? Oh no, it's nothing special, I simply wanted to talk to you... I just wanted to talk to you, the one with the highest kill count among the new students."

"Oh I see... I guess I am the famous number one."

"That is what I've heard. To think a murderer of twelve has arrived at our school, how rare. I even doubted my ears the first time I heard about it."

"That's true. No one kills that many people, usually."

...Although right before his eyes was the Murderer Princess who had killed almost double--twenty one victims.

Kyousuke swallowed the snide remark that had rushed to his throat, muttering "twenty-one huh..." softly to himself.

Furthermore, lurking in Kyousuke's year, there was actually a psycho killer who had slaughtered almost three digits worth of victims, someone whom even Syamaya could not compare to.

When Kyousuke asked the person in question, she had said that "one kill only" was used as the cover story.

That girl was an extremely special existence to begin with, so that was only to be expected.

While he was thinking over these things, Syamaya entered the room without him noticing and picked up Kyousuke's hands. Then she started to recount passionately, bringing her face almost up against his nose.

"Kamiya-san... I hope you can mend your ways no matter what! Right now, you are indeed vicious and cruel, sadistic and abusive, cold and merciless, lustful and depraved, a fucking ●● even worse than human scum... But I used to be the same once."

That description is going way too far! And you used to be like that? So scary.

"--HOW.EV.ER! It's not too late to mend your ways. I have been rehabilitated, to become pure and pristine, noble and perfect, lovely and glamorous, a lady akin to the Virgin Mary..."

That description is going way too far! How much of a narcissist are you?

"...So surely, you too, can be rehabilitated. Although it might be difficult on your own, but in this school, you have us of the Discipline Committee as well as excellent teachers to help you. No matter how twisted your true nature, you will definitely find a new life... I believe in all this!"

Syamaya-senpai's eyes were glimmering brightly as she pleaded in earnest.

--To be honest, this bitch is getting annoying.

Syamaya probably meant no harm and was offering Kyousuke advice out of benevolence.

But Kyousuke's convicted crimes were imposed from false charges. In actual fact, he was an ordinary person who had never touched a homicide case. If he was not twisted to begin with, there was nothing to talk about for a new life. This was just unnecessary meddling.

That said, if he were to let the truth slip by accident, the consequences would be unthinkable...

"Oh okay... I-Is that the case? Oh my~, I'd better try my best to become like you, Syamaya-senpai, to become a real human being, beautiful and clean, as quickly as possible~ Hahaha..."

Kyousuke made a stiff smile and concurred with her.

"Eh? ...Really? Ufufu. A real human being, beautiful and clean, that's too embarrassing. A real human being, beautiful and clean, seriously. Ufufufufu."

Kyousuke did not know if Syamaya was very pleased by Kyousuke's words or not, but she was covering her face with her hands, twisting her body shyly. Kyousuke kept a friendly smile on his face while feeling totally annoyed inside.

--Aww crap, I've gotten involved with another troublesome bitch.

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"...Hmph? Why isn't that nice."

At the Home of Limbo's "cafeteria", Eiri answered indifferently after listening to Kyousuke's story, then immediately started eating. Kyousuke was very surprised while watching Eiri who was sitting diagonally opposite him.

"No no, it's not nice at all! Besides, that's all you have to comment?"

"...What else do you want?"

"W-Well..."

End of conversation. Seeking help, Kyousuke turned his gaze to the person next to Eiri.

"Eh? Eiri-chan is very angry... Awawa."

Maina was already huddled in a ball, totally not in a state that Kyousuke could depend on for backup.

Kyousuke felt more and more depressed, rubbing his stomach that failed to work up an appetite.

Even though they were eating lunch on the tables that were gathered by team, Eiri still maintained this sort of attitude. She was probably still hung up on what happened at the riverbank...

The way she ate ravenously was almost like a demon sword. Due to the steaming air of resentment rising from Eiri that prevented other students from approaching, she was surrounded by a perfect zone of empty seats.

Just as Kyousuke and Maina were enduring Eiri's murderous aura, speechless...

"Oh Kyousuke! It's been a while~ Foosh."

A cheerful voice overhead. Renko.

As soon as he heard the muffled ventilator sound, he was certain without needing to check out the face.

"What do you mean, it's been a while? ...It hasn't been that long since we parted at the river bank."

Kyousuke looked up wryly and saw the expected person.

"Of course not! Three hours have already passed since then. To me, every minute, every second I can't see you is like eternity. Ahhhhh, I really miss you, Kyousuke! I really really love you! I love you to death!"

Waving at Kyousuke, Renko delivered her slogan of love.

Currently next to the gas mask, far up in the air--

"Oh my, you're so bad, Renko seriously~ That's too aggressive. Ufufu."

Two meters tall, a meter wide. The uniform was stretched tight on her body. A girl wearing a brown paper bag over her head with Renko sitting on her shoulder, high up in the air.

"...Huh? ...Woah, huhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

Kyousuke instantly took another look and suffered a massive shock no less than his first encounter with Renko.

Eiri and Maina were also rendered speechless, their hands paused in the middle of bringing food to their mouths.

The paper bag-wearing girl was waving in a cute manner completely contrary to her appearance, expressing disapproval towards Renko's speech.

The rough voice, gender indeterminate, together with the almost bursting uniform felt somewhat familiar to Kyousuke.

This paper bag, no way--

"......Bob."

Although the paper bag prevented him from confirming her bob cut, Kyousuke could see two round eyes staring in puzzlement at him from the two eye holes ripped in the bag.

"......Bob?"

"Oh!? N-No..."

Bob was the nickname Kyousuke had made up on his own, not this girl's name.

Sitting on Bob's shoulder, Renko also went "...Hmm?" in doubt, cocking her head.

"Who's that? This girl isn't called that. She's in Year 1 Class B, my classmate, called--"

"Ehhhh? I see. I am Bob. Nameless... Bob."

"Ehhhhhhhhh? No way!? So you're actually Bob!?"

Nodding, Bob caught Renko's legs just as she almost fell off from leaning back too much.

Visible from those holes, her round eyes were incomparably clear.

"...At least in front of Kamiya-kun, I am. Last time when my confession was rejected and I suffered an unbearable blow, I ended up going on a rampage, right? ...After that incident, I am too ashamed to face Kamiya-kun ever again. So, it's alright. Bob is enough for me. As nameless Bob, it's enough for me to be the dear friend who supports Renko's love!"

" "Bob..." "

Bob's candid declaration touched Kyousuke and Renko's hearts.

Withdrawing due to past shame, for the sake of a former rival in love, now doing her best to offer support to her dear friend, Bob... Was she really such an unbelievably great person?

Wiping tears from the corners of his eyes, Kyousuke turned towards Bob.

"I see... I get it, Bob. I'm the one who should be apologizing about what happened in the past. Sorry for judging people by appearance and getting the wrong idea about you... Let me say again, nice to meet you. Let's get along well together!"

Kyousuke looked up at the paper bagged face, extending a friendly hand for shake.

"...Nice to meet you." The eyes in the holes blinked then Bob answered affectionately. Just as she was about to shake Kyousuke's hand--

"Munch."

"Owwwwwwww!"

Suddenly, a figure cut in and pushed Bob's arm away, biting on Kyousuke's arm. Kyousuke cried out from the sudden burst of pain.

After a moment, Bob and Renko both screamed.

"Ah... Hey! Not allowed, Chihiro!"

"Uwah!? What are you doing to Kyousuke, Chihiro!? You promised not to eat him, right!?"

The "Chihiro" mentioned by Bob and Renko was a girl hanging on Kyousuke's arm, moving her teeth single-mindedly while going "...munch munch."

Petite body paired with long black hair. Her blood-red eyes were almost fully closed in bliss. "...Ahahaha. So yummy~ Munch munch. Smooch~~" She refused to stop, chewing and sucking both of Kyousuke's arms.

"Sigh, this girl... What am I going to do with her, jeez!"

Bob frantically knelt down and gingerly pulled the girl--Chihiro--off from Kyousuke's arm, then slapped her on the head as reprimand. Sliding down Bob's body, Renko held her arms akimbo and protested angrily at Chihiro who was sucking her fingers. "Chihiro! You promised, right!? Before I kill Kyousuke, you're not allowed to eat him, okay!? Just eat him before rigor mortis sets in, got that..."

--Hey, hold on, what the heck kind of promise is that? I never heard about it.

"I'm not eating... Just checking out the taste... I'm holding myself back, you know?"

Kyousuke examined Chihiro who was pouting while sucking her finger. His memories were still fresh.

She was one of the girls who had confessed to him three months ago back at the beginning of the school year.

She was the cannibal girl who intended to eat Kyousuke, saying "Let me eat Kamiya-kun... To become one flesh." This unexpected reunion caused Kyousuke to cry out "Ah."

"You're from that time--"

"...Year 1 Class B, Andou Chihiro. Fourteen years old. Kamiya-kun, long time no see!"

"Oh... Long time no see?"

Withdrawing from Chihiro who was grinning with her well-developed double teeth while rubbing his teeth marked arms, Kyousuke looked at Renko's gas mask.

"Sigh... So this girl's in your class too?"

"Yeah, that's right. Me, Bob, Chihiro and--"

"Kukuku... Kamiya Kyousuke, waited impatiently have I for hither moment when we shall meet again!"

At this moment, as though interrupting Renko, a pretentious voice rang out.

On the other end of the table, with his left arm wrapped in black bandages, a boy smiled fearlessly with the right side of his face covered, standing there with his body tilted slightly to the left.

"Mine appellation be Makiyouin Kuuga! Thou wouldst do well to carve it on thy soul... 'Tis the name of the one who shall send thee to thy grave on the night of the apocalypse. Kukuku... Mine arm of left, Azrael, is also hurting, pleading that it is 'wanting offer thee a requiem' and 'wanting to offer thee the flower from yonder shore named despair', Kamiya Kyousuke."

"...Oh sure. Let me introduce a bit. This here is Year 1 Class B's Suzuki Michirou-kun! Because we seem to have trouble making friends in our class, I'm really glad we can get along with him. Foosh."

The boy glared angrily and shouted in response to Renko's nonchalant introduction:

"Silence, fool! This name is but ephemeral... Simply the name of the vessel my soul hath replaced when manifesting in this world at Ground Zero. The true name of mine noble spirit, 'tis Makiyouin Kuu--"

"...Michirou-kun? I know you're very happy that Kamiya-kun is talking with you, but I'm gonna get mad if you don't behave. Lunch time is limited so hurry, sit down and eat properly."

"...Oh, yes."

Under Bob's effective threats, Makiyouin--or rather, Michirou--instantly lost all dignity and sat down.

At this moment, Eiri glared at him sharply, causing him to go "Eeek!? My most humble apologies!", switching to polite speech and aplogizing with his head bowed. You get scared way too easily, Makiyouin Kuuga...

Chihiro made her way across the table to Michirou's side to comfort him "Don't worry."

Renko sat down next to Kyousuke. Then Bob sat down by Renko's side, taking up two seats. Kyousuke resumed his interrupted meal. Eating the first dish after arriving at the Home of Limbo, 'maggot risotto' (salt-flavored rice porridge), they started a lively and peaceful conversation.

"By the way, Eiri-chan... May I call you that? Your skin is so pretty~! Your makeup is also put on so naturally, it's lovely. What kind of foundation do you use? And mascara?"

"...Huh? W-Well--"

"Kyah~! What's with these nails, so cute~ Eiri-chan, you're really at the forefront of fashion!"

"Oh... R-Really? This is nothing much... Th-Thank you."

Shoving her spoon up from under the paper bag, Bob cheerfully made conversation with Eiri.

Originally taken aback by the unusual gap between appearance and personality, Eiri was gradually caught in Bob's pace, relieving her prickly attitude somewhat.

Seeing them chat about beauty tips and fashion, Renko smiled "foosh."

"Hmm hmm, there's nothing better than happiness. Although they're members of my class, during the open-jail school, let's all get along together, shall we?"

Renko took out a black tube and connected it to the right side of her gas mask.

While Renko was slurping the rice porridge like a drink, Kyousuke nodded next to her.

"Yeah. Let's all get along. Looks like you've got some pretty decent classmates."

"Foosh... I know right? Even though they're basically a group similar to abandoned trash, ostracized in Class B."

"I see." Hearing Renko's comment, Kyousuke smiled awkwardly.

Perhaps because they stood out as ostracized weirdos in the class, that was why they were such good friends.

After all, Kyousuke's gang was similarly composed of extreme "heretics" in the Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation, ostracized existences on many levels--

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Orienteering of the Seven Atonements

In your groups, finish all the checkpoints of this timed race.

There are a total of seven checkpoints.

Gluttony, Lust, Envy, Greed, Wrath, Sloth and Pride.

Once all team members have gathered at a checkpoint, the Discipline Committee members on standby will cross out on the of seven P stamps on the "Deadly Sins Card" that has been issued to team leaders.

P stands for "peccati" which is plural in Italian for "sins", thus representing the Seven Deadly Sins.

The race is finished by reaching the mountaintop with all Ps crossed out.

The last team to finish will face "Condemnation", so please prepare yourselves.

Also, losing the Deadly Sins Card or any team member along the way means instant disqualification entailing coercive condemnation.

Disregarding the disqualified teams, the last team to finish will also suffer condemnation as well.

These are the basic rules. The current time is 12:30.

The Orienteering of the Seven Atonements hereby begins.

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"Orienteering of the Seven Atonements huh..."

Staring at the Deadly Sins Card hanging below his neck, Kyousuke muttered to himself.

The card with multiple colors marked on a white background had been handed to him. After listening to the rules at the Discipline Plaza, Kyousuke and the others were taken to the foot of a treacherous mountain that was right next to the Home of Limbo. After getting ready at the positions under the Discipline Committee members' directions, the race began with the sounding of a shrill whistle. Fifteen minutes passed within the blink of an eye.

"Awawa. W-W-W-W-W-What shoulda do... Auau."

"What to do... Well, it's just crossing a bridge."

Kyousuke and his teammates were standing before a deep ravine. Staring at the bottom of the cliff, Maina was shaking tremendously. The river flowing below seemed absurdly far away.

Traversing the top of this deep gorge, where falls were fatal, was a ragged rope bridge that looked like it could break any time, swaying in the wild winds over the ravine.

The Sloth checkpoint that Kyousuke's team decided to visit first was just ahead.

Just to be safe, they had checked out the surrounding area, but in the end, this was the only path leading to the checkpoint. Eiri was right, it was just crossing a bridge, but...

"Are you okay, Maina? If you're not feeling well, I'll give you piggy back ride."

"Ueh!? Oh, umm... Well, well... I-Imma fine!"

Although Maina said that, looking at the way she was staring at the rope bridge and trembling, she totally did not seem fine. "...Better not push yourself too hard, right?" Kyousuke scratched the back of his head and was just about to let Maina climb onto his back when...

"Yahahhhhhhhhh! This piece of shit bridge is no stress at all! Yahaha!"

Completely wrapped in bandages, the boy with the red mohawk was charging towards the starting end of the bridge.

This student was the one who had been bludgeoned out of commision early this morning--Mohican.

"Argh, retard! Why is he charging on his own!?"

"...!?"

Just as Eiri screamed, Kyousuke instantly imagined a certain scene and recalled certain words.

Challenging the rope bridge with foolhardiness, stepping too hard and ending up falling through the bottom, straight down into the ravine, his classmate Mohican. As well as...

Losing any team member along the way means instant disqualification entailing coercive condemnation.

This was part of the orienteering rules.

"Hey Mohican! Hold it right there!!"

"Gopuu!?"

Using a lariat move, Kyousuke forcibly stopped Mohican who was just rushing past him. Struck by the lariat in the throat, Mohican fell over on his face and stopped moving.

"Phew... Sheesh, that was really close. I almost died."

"...He's not dead yet?"

"M-Maybe he's already dead..."

Looking at Mohican whose eyes were rolled up and frothing at the mouth, Eiri and Maina murmured.

"No, he should be alive... After all, it's Mohican."

"Awawa. But but, sure enough... he's still alive. After all, it's Mohican-san."

"That's right. All we need is 'the entire team to gather at the checkpoint', right? Even if he lost consciousness, it'll be fine as long as we transport him with us."

Kyousuke nodded and loaded Mohican on his back... Damn he's heavy.

No matter how dangerous it was to cross the bridge like this, waking Mohican up was definitely going to be more dangerous. Left alone, he was going to do stupid things immediately...

"...But what about Maina now? How about I drop this guy on the other side and come back to carry you?"

"Oh... No need, I'm okay! I will do my best!"

Although she still looked uneasy, perhaps the sight of Mohican on a rampage helped her to understand something. The trembling of her body had improved a bit.

"Just tell me any time if you're not feeling well, 'kay?" Saying that, Kyousuke walked towards the other side of the bridge.

"...Okay. Let's cross this bridge carefully."

He stepped onto the battered log that had suffered countless weathering.

Using his left hand to grip the rope for support, securing Mohican with his right, Kyousuke began to advance.

Maina also followed immediately with Eiri holding the rear.

The gaps between logs were quite large, big enough for the width of shoes to pass through. Kyousuke carefully walked on such a bridge while slowly making his way step by step. With every movement, the bridge would creak and shake.

The bark was peeling and falling off towards the distant bottom, sucked into the bottom of the dark valley...

"E-Eeeeeeeeeeeeek!?"

A gust of wind made Maina frown deeply and crouch down on the spot.

From the corners of her tightly shut eyes, massive tear drops were appearing.

"...Hey, are you really okay? I could give you a ride too, you know?"

Looking down at the trembling Maina, Eiri spoke with care and concern.

Eiri was not holding the rope at all, even leaking a yawn, advancing on the logs as though walking on flat ground.

Seeing her so composed, Kyousuke could tell that carrying Maina would be a piece of cake for her. However, Maina--

"I'm fine, Eiri-chan. I-I w-will cross... by myself..."

Still gripping the rope tightly, she stood up unsteadily.

"I-It's not fair... i-if I'm the only one... not making progress!"

Creak. She took a step forward.

Pursing her lips, suppressing her body's trembling, she showed determination in her eyes.

"Maina..."

"...Yeah, I get it. Then hang in there a little longer."

Kyousuke was touched by Maina's courage while it made Eiri smile.

Confirming that Maina was slowly advancing, the two of them continued to walk again.

"Oh my oh my oh my~? Why isn't that Kamiya-san over there!"

Standing on the opposite cliff was a very familiar boy.

A handsome youth with light-brown hair. Kyousuke's classmate Saotome Shinji.

Then Shinji's appearance also implied--

"HUH~? Oh really!? Hahaha, so fucking slow. Is he trembling like a yellow belly!?"

"H-Heehee... wind flowing skirts... panties, panties... H-Heeheehee."

Dreadlocks and shades, Oonogi Arata, accompanied by the short hunchback, Usami Kagerou.

There was also another girl. With herself wrapped around Shinji's arm, she was pointing at Kyousuke's group.

"Kyahaha! That's so bad. What a joke! Gap moe? Kyahaha! Too amazing~ Too miraculous~!"

"What's with that bitch... Is she in our class?"

"...Hell if I know. Someone so retarded should be easy to remember, right?"

"Awawa. W-What should I do... I-I totally can't understand her!"

The girl laughing hysterically was probably one of their classmates. A bimbo with heavy makeup and a bleached complexion. Her limited vocabulary left others with a deep impression. Shrill voice.

"Hoho, that's true. I think so too. Hohoho... I totally don't get it either."

--Wait, why the heck do you have no idea either?

Shinji concurred with them while embracing the bimbo who was throwing herself at him.

What the fuck is up with that guy... Still pointing at the surprised Kyousuke and others, the bimbo suddenly went "...Oh. I just thought of an idea" then gathered the boys together to murmur something.

Shinji went "...Yes... Yes, yes... Sure, fine, yes!" and nodded repeatedly, his face getting twisted. Then he coughed pretentiously:

"Ahem, everyone. It pains me to watch them desperately crossing the bridge in such trepidation... So I have a suggestion. Although we can only offer our meager efforts, let's help by 'cheering' for them!"

The four of them bowed in unison then casually picked up piles of stuff.

Cheering... What the fuck were they plotting?

Very soon, they were standing in a row with a pile of stones held in their arms against their chests.

"...W-W-What!? Those guys aren't going to--"

" " " "Do your best, do your best, do your best, do your best!" " " "

Aiming at Kyousuke's group in the center of the bridge, they began to throw the large number of stones they had picked up from the ground. Even more infuriating was the fact that every one of them had pretty good aim.

"Uwah!?" Kyousuke released the rope and ducked down, using Mohican on his back to block the rain of stones.

Maina went "Eeeeeek!?" and curled herself up.

"Tsk... Seriously, this is such a pain! Didn't you promise not to make a move on us again!?"

Eiri dodged the stones with minimal movements on the logs while roaring angrily.

Then Shinji deliberately made a dumb expression.

"We're not making a move~! Just throwing stones, that's all~ Huheehee."

Playing word games like a gradeschooler.

Eiri had murder in her eyes while veins bulged on her forehead.

"Oh my, is that so... Do you really wish to be torn into a million pieces by me?"

Glaring at the laughing Shinji, she lowered her center of gravity.

Her decorated nails reflected the sunlight.

"...Then I'll just have to grant your wish."

Throwing down these words, Eiri kicked the logs and accelerated all at once. With flowing motions she rushed across the rope bridge despite the challenging footholds, preparing to attack. In that instant--

"Hey, cut that out!"

A massive shadow flew out of the dense forest behind Shinji's group, powerfully pushing the dreadlocks guy down onto the ground while he was laughing madly and repeatedly throwing stones.

"Gepuu!?"

Face smashed against the ground, Oonogi was instantly taken out.

Noticing the unusual situation, Usami spun around.

"Kyah!?"

A small shadow flew out and pinned him down. Then it bit him and started munching.

"Kyahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

Usami made an ear-splitting scream. The shadow refused to release it jaws, entangling Usami's neck, completely stuck to it.

"Ah!? What's with these people!? --Fooh!?"

The panicking bimbo was struck in the chin by an acute upper cut.

In front of the bimbo who bit her tongue and flipped over, raising her tattooed right arm proudly in the air was the girl in the black gas mask. Also--

"Kukuku... How unsightly. All talk and no bite, these lowly beings. Very unfortunately, hither is our stage, ye wouldst best exit with haste... Hooh. How now? We shan't take ye lives. Ye souls of insignificant dust, ultimately cannot satisfy the tongue of Azrael with its most particular tastes... Bow ye heads and beg for mercy! Kukuku... Huhahahaha... hahahahahaha!"

The laughter was heard all around. "Y-You..." Shinji turned around and remarked in surprise:

"...Aren't you Class B's Michirou-san? You're still going on with that?"

He shrugged mockingly.

Immersed in the Makiyouin Kuuga's speech, Michirou's face became colored with shame and anger.

"What... thou sayst? Art thou mocking me? Kukuku... So be it. Then the wounds known as stigmata shall be carved upon thy ignorant and weak little soul!"

"Oh yes yes yes. If you're able to, please carve as quickly as possible? Don't dally any further."

"...Hey."

Feeling a light pat on his shoulder, Shinji turned around impatiently.

"What? I'm busy with Michirou-san here right now--"

"Do you really wish to die that much?"

"Bupee!?"

Eiri's fluid upper kick was buried into Shinji's face that was turning to her.

Struck on the side of his face, Shinji was sent flying, striking his head on the bridge post then falling on the ground.

"...Hmph, just die already, perverted fake gentleman."

"I can't believe it... Striped panties? Kukuku... I see, not bad--"

"You can go die too!"

"Guhahhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

Michirou was kicked flying next, striking Shinji and falling unconscious.

Having downed Oonogi, Bob laughed "ara ara" wryly and walked over to the furious Eiri.

"Michirou-kun is quite the closet pervert, unexpectedly. Ufufu."

"...So flavor sucks. I knew it, Kyousuke-kun's flesh is still... the best."

After eating her fill of Usami, Chihiro wiped her red-stained lips and walked over to Bob. The blood flowing from Usami's neck flowed all the way to the ground.

Having taken care of the bimbo, Renko nonchalantly jumped over her body and walked over to the bridge, waving energetically.

"Hey~ Kyousuke!! Maina!! Everyone okay? Foosh."

Confirming the sight of Renko, Kyousuke and Maina felt drained of energy all at once.

"Oh, we're fine. Thanks to you all... We'll be over in a jiffy. Wait for us."

With speed much faster than before, they crossed the remaining half of the bridge.

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"...Okay. We've got one site done at least."

Confirming that one of the seven stamps--a super deformed bear stamp--had been crossed out from the Deadly Sins Card, Kyousuke nodded with satisfaction.

According to what the Discipline Committee member on standby had said, the bear was the symbol of "sloth" and corresponded to the virtue of "courage". Sloth while crossing the dangerous rope bridge was purified by courage, thus the P stamp indicating sin was crossed out--Something like that, apparently.

The Deadly Sins Card still had other stamps such as a snake, a fox, a wolf, a goat, a lion etc. After reaching the various checkpoints, the corresponding stamps would be crossed out one after another.

"Six more huh... There's a long journey ahead of us."

"Yeah... Foosh. But as long as we all help each other out, it'll be easy!"

Walking by Kyousuke's side, Renko made a maloik hand sign.

Following behind them, Bob went "Ufufu. Yeah, it'll be easy" and laughed. Sitting on Bob's shoulder, Maina applauded and went "Everyone is so reliable!"

At the back, Eiri was flipping through a rouge-colored booklet.

"...Hmm. After re-reading the rules in the guide, I can't find anything forbidding teams from cooperating. Also, there's nothing about obstructing other teams either."

--So that was that. Hence, Kyousuke and Renko's teams joined forces.

"Aye." Michirou expressed agreement with what Eiri said, then cackled with evil laughter.

"Kukuku... By the way, 'tis truly a piece of work. Underestimating opponents, trying to obstruct, ending up with comeuppance, truly unexpected. This already ensures our victory. We just need to win! Kukuku... Huhahaha... Ahahaha--"

"Shut up."

"...S-Sorry."

"Well, it's true that we just need to win. Or rather, it's good enough as long as we don't lose. Because only the last team is punished... If we totally crush one team, then it should be very relaxing without any time pressure."

Closing up the booklet and putting it in her backpack, Eiri yawned.

After getting glared at, what the dejected Michirou was talking about was Shinji's group.

After returning to the rope bridge from the checkpoint, Renko had euthanized them again just as they were recovering consciousness.

Pummeling them again after a first pummeling, it was totally the work of a heartless demon's.

Because Shinji's group deserved it, Kyousuke and the others simply turned a blind eye to it.

--No matter what, they did not want to end up last. They did not want to suffer condemnation.

"But if we're careless... Any member dying also gets us disqualified... Oh, but if Kyousuke-kun dies, I can eat him, right? Not leaving a single bone behind... Nice and clean!"

Spontaneously appearing by Kyousuke's side, Chihiro flashed her double teeth, grinning wide.

Kyousuke trembled and went "...Uh huh" while Renko instantly cried out:

"Don't worry. Kyousuke, you're not going to die! I absolutely won't let you get get killed! We promised, before I steal your heart away, no matter who, no matter what happens, I won't let anyone take you away... Right? Kyousuke~"

She hugged Kyousuke's arm tightly.

Behind the cardigan and the blouse, something soft was touching him.

"O-Oh... Thanks. That's a relief. Hahaha..."

"...Tsk. Just die already."

"Eeek!? Please don't kill me!"

"Not talking about you."

Eiri sighed in exasperation as Michirou jumped back.

At this time, she felt a giant hand on her shoulder.

"Eiri-chan, it must be tough for you too~ ...But I can understand how you feel. Because I've went through the same thoughts before. As much as I'm cheering fully for my dear friend Renko right now, I want to cheer for you too. If you want to talk about anything, feel free to confide in me any time."

"...Eh? H-Huh? ...What are you talking about? I totally don't get it."

"Ufufu. It's okay. I understand everything."

"That's right! Hang in there, Eiri-chan! Despite the flat chest!"

"....."

Bob smiled suggestively while Maina encouraged Eiri with a raised fist. Eiri tensed her expression and fell silent. Michirou then tiptoed... to pull back some distance.

"...What were they talking about just now?"

"Who knows. Foosh. Everyone seems to be having fun, so how about we have our own bedroom talk? ...Kyousuke, how many babies do you want?"

"What the fuck are you talking about so suddenly!?"

Kyousuke could not help but imagine Renko holding a baby.

The baby was wrapped in a clean towel, wearing a pitch-black gas mask...

"No wait, there shouldn't be one. A newborn shouldn't be wearing one, I guess."

"...You too, why are you raising that kind of topic?"

Chatting happily like this, they advanced towards the next checkpoint.

Meanwhile, sleeping soundly on Kyousuke's back, Mohican talked happily in his dreams:

"Hya~ Hah~ ...Harder, baby~ Kurumiya-chwaaaa~n..."

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"Oh my~ That was so fun, the Orienteering of the Seven Atonements. Too exciting! I'm so glad we finished everything safely. Foosh."

Renko stretched and remarked cheerfully, fanning her Deadly Sins Card.

On the white paper, all seven stamps were each crossed out with a ×.

Roughly three hours had passed since the Orienteering of the Seven Atonements started. Kyousuke and Renko's teams flawlessly conquered all the checkpoints.

Right now, the two teams were heading to the finish line at the mountaintop.

"Right... I'm so glad we can finish. Although we were wandering on the verge of death a few times..."

Saying that, Kyousuke wiped the sweat from his brow.

The journey to each of the checkpoints was truly too harsh.

Exploring caves that were totally dark, climbing cliffs without any safety equipment at all, chased after by twenty-meter giant pythons, swimming across bottomless swamps where large numbers of leeches lived, it was truly a journey full of life-and-death crises.

It was virtually a miracle that no one fell victim to the hazards.

Advancing along the way, Kyousuke and the others became all covered in wounds. Renko was the only one who still remained energetic. Even Mohican who played a spectacular role as a shield and live sacrifice ended up riddled with injuries on the verge of death, his four limbs dangling helplessly while he lay on Kyousuke's back, eyes rolled over.

"Huff, so tired... so damn tired. I really want to go back sooner to rest..."

"You don't need to stay in character anymore?"

"...Kukuku. Mine appellation be Makiyouin Kuuga. Suffering the underhanded machinations of the gods who banded together in fear of mine excessive magical power, the tragic demon king who was exiled to the demon realm together with the one-winged angel of death, Azrael..."

The haggard Michirou stood up straight and made a pose, turning back into Kuuga.

Having gotten down from riding Bob's shoulder, Maina was walking on her own when she went "awawa... loose, it's getting loose!" then helped tie Michirou's bandages.

Bob went "...ara ara" and laughed wryly under the brown paper bag.

"Kyousuke-kun... See that? Hey, there's a slab of meat standing there."

"That's a person, not meat... Oh really. Isn't that Busujima-sensei?"

Chihiro was pointing at a malaise-looking man in a suit, holding a sign which read "GOAL"--Year 1 Class B's homeroom teacher Busujuma Kirito, standing there at a loss.

After noticing Kyousuke's entourage approaching, he made a bored look.

"Oh, you're finally here! You guys are the last teams~"

"What did... you say?"

Kyousuke heard words that could not be ignored. Everyone suddenly halted in their steps.

...Last teams? Kyousuke and the others? --No, impossible. Although it was definitely a tough journey, they definitely had Shinji's group at the bottom for insurance...

"...Oh my? I can't have made a mistake, have I? Well, let's see... There are a total of eight teams. Class B's Team 2 was disqualified due to a member dropping out from injuries. Class A's Team 1 was also disqualified for losing their Deadly Sins Card... Yeah, just as I thought. You two teams are the only ones left. Hurry up~"

From behind Busujima came a laid back voice:

"What a miscalculation... While you guys were beating us up, we lost our Deadly Sins Card and were disqualified... How are you going to compensate us?"

Instantly, Kyousuke and the others recalled the rules for the Orienteering of the Seven Atonements.

Also, losing the Deadly Sins Card or any team member along the way means instant disqualification entailing coercive condemnation.

Also...

Disregarding the disqualified teams, the last team to finish will also suffer condemnation as well.

"...!?"

Immediately, Kyousuke's view shook due to a large mass moving.

While the ground shook from the footsteps--Thud, a heavy punch.

Instantly suffering this impact on his back, Kyousuke went "Gubyaa!?" and was sent flying together with the unconscious Mohican. Flying a few meters in the air, he landed on his back. After minimizing the impact as much as he could, Kyousuke instantly stood up--

"...Ku!?" "Ahhhhhh!?"

A frontal heavy impact this time. Blood splattered, bones cracked.

"...Sorry, don't hate me for this."

Prepared to punch again, a giant shadow in a lowered stance.

Under the brown paper bag, murky yet calm eyes were staring at Kyousuke.

"Bob... Y-You...!?"

Kyousuke was greatly stunned, speechless. Having suffered Bob's iron punch in the face, Mohican had fainted without any exaggeration at all. Stepping over Mohican who had served as the shield, Bob made a sorrowful sound.

Tears were streaming down her eyes that had Kyousuke in her sights.

"Yesterday's friend, today's foe. Sorry, I don't want my teammates to suffer condemnation."

" " "...!?" " "

Coming back to their senses, everyone realized their position.

There was only one method to avoid coming in last place, one method to be free of condemnation.

"So, for my comrades' sake--I will crush you all."

"Uwahhhhhhhh!?"

Michirou screamed and pounced on Eiri who was nearest.

"...Tsk!"

Eiri swiftly evaded then returned with a kick just as she brushed past him. Suffering a kick in the gut, he instantly collapsed with a "Gueh!?"

But in that instant, he suddenly opened his eyes.

"Gotcha!!!"

"Eh!? What the... Kyahhhhhhhhh!?'

Eiri screamed straight from her soul. Hugging Eiri's legs with both arms, Michirou was trying to pull her down like that. Intimidated by his vigor, Eiri wavered and lost balance, falling on the ground.

"Eiri-chan!? Oh n-n-n-n-n-n-n-no~~ Aheee!?"

"Munch." Chihiro bit Maina in the thigh just as she was running over to Eiri.

This mishap caused Maina to lose balance with Chihiro hanging on her left leg.

"Uwahhhhhhhhh!"

Then she fell, performing a magnificent front flip through habit.

"...Eh? Ah... Kyah!?"

Maina landed as though smashing her heel against the ground. Caught in between Maina and the ground, Chihiro was tragically crushed.

"Wha... Ch-Chihiro!? Just now, what on earth--"

"Please forgive me."

Kyousuke did not fail to take advantage of the opening presented when Bob was startled by Maina's clumsiness.

Dropping the near-dead Mohican, he sent a merciless straight punch into the center of the giant body in front of him. Sinking into the thick layer of protective fat, Kyousuke's fist struck the body within.

"Guah!?"

Bob's massive body was blown away like a spring, producing an insane cloud of dust from the ground, sliding until finally stopping at the feet of Renko who was standing there in shock. Blood began to flow out from the paper bag's opening.

"Bob!" Renko called out and hugged her upper body.

"Are you still alive!? Bob, Bob!!!!!?"

"...R-Renko."

"Bob! I-I'm so glad... You're still alive--"

"Run."

"Huh?"

"Run! Don't let our... sacrifices... go to waste..."

"...!?"

Renko's body shuddered all of sudden.

Then instantly, Kyousuke heard Eiri's urgent voice.

"What are you spacing out for, Kyousuke!? Start running too! Hurry! You have to cross the finish line with the Deadly Sins Card before Renko--Kyah!? Hey... Where are you touching!? Molester! S-Stop it... Show some restraint or I'll slaughter you--"

While trying to shake off Michirou who was hugging her legs with a nosebleed and refusing to let go, Eiri urged Kyousuke while she was red in the face.

"Michirou, you asshole..."

--I'm so fucking jealous, switch with me!

The black gas mask swiftly went past Kyousuke just as he was about to start negotiations.

Hanging on her neck was the Deadly Sins Card that was only issued to team leaders.

While Kyousuke was drawn to Michirou's heroic exploits, Renko left Bob and ran over.

Coming back to his senses, Kyousuke frantically chased after her.

"Slow the fuck down, Renko!!!!"

"No! I don't want to be condemned either! Shuko! Shuko!"

The two of them sprinted desperately to their goal, the finish line where Busujima was waiting.

They rushed towards the peak that was a couple dozen meters away, trying to get ahead of each other.

"Wow, so amazing. Such a close race... Do your best, both of you! If you lose, you'll be facing terrifying condemnation~ CON. DEM. NATION, yo! The first person to touch my hand wins. Hurry, just a little more! Do your best!!"

Busujima released the "goal" sign and extended his hand at the finish line.

Victory went to the first person to touch his hand. Running side by side, trying to push each other away, Kyousuke and Renko dashed at full speed.

" "Uohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! HOW CAN I LOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOSE!" "

Projected from the bottom of their lungs, their roars merged together.

Finish line. Busujima's hand. Right before their eyes. Bob, Eiri, Michirou and Chihiro all gulped, staring at the victory trend.

Kyousuke and Renko, the two team leaders, each with a Deadly Sins Card on their neck, reached out to Busujima's hand almost simultaneously...

Under the summer sky, the whistle blew shrilly to announce the end of the contest.

The Orienteering of the Seven Atonements ended without incident at 15:40.

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"...So, good work everyone. Oh my~ Everyone tried so hard? I was expecting one or two deaths, but everyone survived although there were many injuries. Oh dear, great job everyone!"

Smiling in a manner that did not suit his haggard face, Busujima applauded.

The weak applause coming from one person gradually died down and suddenly stopped.

Wiping the smile off his face, Busujima made a gloomy expression.

"...But unfortunately, in this cold, merciless and unreasonable world, effort alone is not enough to secure a good rating. Futile efforts, expectations in vain, failing to grasp happiness even after surmounting countless hardship--That goes the same for anyone who lost their life suddenly one day to a murderer like you. That's the way things are in this world, it's very cruel."

" " "..." " "

Many students were kneeling in seiza posture on the bare ground in front of the lamenting Busujima.

One, two, three, four... A total of fourteen. With the injuried taken out, they were the members of the teams that were either disqualified or came in last.

Standing before them, looking down at their faces, Busujima spoke.

The back of his heavily creased suit suddenly bulged out.

"...Hee!?"

The spectating students were gathered around as though encircling the victims who were about to be condemned. Behind Busujima, a boy from Class B timidly made a convulsive sound.

A strange bulging was growing from Busujima's back. The object was squirming like an enlarged hand ball, then started to split into two, moving slowly.

Moving from his back to his shoulders, then from his shoulders to his arms...

Standing on one corner of the Discipline Plaza, Kurumiya was watching this scene with an evil grin.

"Everyone did try hard. I do admire this effort because I am very kind. But unfortunately, the world is harsh... Especially this world where you're all currently living, it's especially harsh. Let me give you a word of advice. Effort without results is worthless. A process without results is meaningless. In other words, you bunch of losers are even worse than swine in this world."

Busujima's gloomy atmosphere suddenly changed.

Violet and yellow masses fell from his two dangling sleeves.

--Plop.

Landing on the ground, squirming, were two snakes.

As thick as metal pipes, they were more than twice as long, however. Covered with vivid colors that emphasized their deadly poison, they were covered in geometric patterns that resembled tattoos.

"Okay, everyone. Let's go according to schedule and start what comes after the Orienteering of the Seven Atonements--Public Disciplining of the condemned.

Spectating students should not get too complacent. If you lower your guard... The next one might end up visiting you, capish?"

Busujima explained to the observing students.

What changed was not only the atmosphere but also the fact that they could all get caught up in it.

From behind, from his shoulders, from his upper arms, from his lower arms--Numerous bulges of various sizes appeared.

Moving towards his waist, his bottom, his thighs, his ankles--Squriming as they moved.

Under the suit, those things moved randomly, emerging from the exits, flying towards the external world. Busujima's soggy eyes confirmed the targets.

They were directed towards the scared, trembling, crying, shouting students who were trying to escape.

"...Okay, thank you for your patience."

Cold sarcasm was followed by--

"Next up, the public disciplining of the condemned... Let the Venom Opera commence."

He had released the swarm of deadly weapons he had painstakingly raised.

From the collar, shirt sleeves, pants hems--Released all at once...

Out flew snakes, toads, lizards, ants, centipedes, spiders, wasps and caterpillars.

" " " "E-Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeek!?" " " "

Swarming into an avalanche, they assaulted the students.

The animals were all equipped with sharp teeth or stingers, some even had claws. As soon as they were liberated they pierced their prey's skin. Instantly--

" " " "...!?" " " "

Suffering this assault, the students' bodies suffered myriad "changes".

Those bitten by snakes fell to the ground on the spot, holding their necks, convulsing violently.

Those entangled by lizards were paralyzed, stiffening as hard as rock, unable to move.

Those stung by wasps gave deafening screams, thrashing about in pain.

A hellish scene with howls from hell--Amidst the screaming and animals flying all over the place in the Discipline Plaza, some of the victims charged randomly, entering the crowd and causing a commotion.

Kurumiya watched this tragedy in amusement, laughing "...kukuku" in her throat.

"...Venom Opera--Busujima is a user of toxins. Hiding and raising poisonous life forms on his body, taming and training them flawlessly, commanding them to do his bidding freely... By his own choice, Busujima has concocted a mixture of all kinds of toxins with various effects. Neurotoxins, paralyzing toxins, hemorrhaging toxins, sleep toxins... Not only laughing toxins and aphrodisiacs, but even toxins that infects victims with a catchphrase of gozaru, ridiculous as it sounds. After injecting multiple toxins into the target's body, further variations can be caused... Kukuku. Despite looking like a useless good-for-nothing, he's actually a sadist even worse than me. Using his toxins--the elements of his opera--to produce changes in the prey, he derives unparalleled pleasure from the process... Namely, as the audience and conductor."

While Kurumiya was leisurely explaining, the students continued to be abused and suffering abject pain.

In the center of the Discipline Plaza where students and animals were tussling with one another, Shinji was holding the exhausted bimbo's arm, screaming "W-Who can save me--Hic. W-Who can save me!!!!!! Hic!" The instant a wasp stung

his neck, he held his neck and squeezed a "Ooh!?" sound out from his throat before passing out cold, not moving at all.

"...Phew. Well, things have come to this, huh. I was too mesmerized in disciplining, there were even some unexpected chain reactions. Let's not have things get too outrageous, shall we? Once poisoned, you'll really die if the antidote isn't injected quickly--This, oh my? Oh my oh my~?"

Busujima quietly swept his gaze across the venue, nodding.

His expressionless eyes were focused once again.

Ahead of his surprised and intrigued gaze was--

"Only one person is totally fine... Oh I see. Ordinary poisons basically have no effect on you. That's way too good an immune system. Since the weak toxins used for disciplining are no good, I'll just have to use something slightly more powerful. How should we proceed next?"

"..Shuko."

Surrounded by animals, a girl maintained her proper posture of seiza all along.

Wearing a black gas mask, she had lost to Kyousuke at the last moment, ending up as the leader of the team coming in last place--Renko.

"Sorry... I'm sorry, everyone... I'm too useless... Sob sob."

In front of the contrite Renko, her teammates were in a tragic state.

Swarmed by a huge number of mosquitoes, Michirou was going "itchy itchy itchy itchy itchy itchy itchy, the itching is killing me!" while scratching randomly all over his body. Chihiro was motionless, lying face up with a giant toad sitting on her face. Bob's body was convulsing, flopping around like a fish on land, shaking the ground...

Busujima walked slowly over to Renko who was trembling while looking at her teammates.

Renko's gas mask was slightly bowed down as she whispered weakly:

"I never knew they'd obstruct running so much. Swaying like mad when I'm running, they hurt so much, so heavy... If only my boobs weren't so huge... If only I'm a flat chest like Eiri! Then I'll win 100% for sure. Clearly I should have won! Shuko..."

--Indeed. What decided the winner was Renko's massive bust.

"...Serves you right." Quietly watching the public disciplining from behind Kyousuke's back, Eiri mocked.

While Renko was looking down at her chest in dejection, Busujima went up to her with his stubbled face.

"...Oh my oh my, what a poor dear. But actually, you don't have to feel so down. Giant boobs are great. Giant boobs are precious. You have a pair of melons that are the dreams of men! So cheer up and devote your energy to satisfying men's lower halves. Your boobs are wonderful--Aren't they?"

--The fuck.

"...What the hell is with that guy, just go die already."

"...I'll have to really discipline that asshole."

Eiri and Kurumiya, the two flat chests, exuded murderous intent.

"Well, anyway, I have a job for you."

Looking at Renko's chest, Busujima had another animal crawl out from his right sleeve.

A snake with terrifyingly vivid pink scales that depicted heart-shaped patterns.

Bringing the snake that had crawled from his arm to his fingertips, Busujima pressed near Renko.

Most likely feeling fear instinctively, Renko screamed "Eeek!?" and fell on her ass.

"B-Busujima-sensei... W-W-W-W-W-What is this!?"

"This is Pink Killer--Kobiyan here."

"Kobiyan!?"

"Yeah. He's my great friend. Don't get fooled by his body's color but he's actually male. I can see that half-assed poisons aren't going to work on you, so I'm bringing out this excellent fella--That said, I've picked a non-life threatening poison. It's an excellent fit for your current state."

"B-Busujima-sensei... W-What kind of poison is this...?"

"...Who knows? A picture is worth a thousand words, no need to think anything, just use your body to experience it. Experience it thoroughly."

"Eeeek..."

He extended the poisonous snake--Kobiyan--towards Renko who was crawling away backwards. The almost heart-shaped triangular head reeled back then shot forward in the next instant, pouncing on the prey ahead.

"U-Uwahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

Renko's screams were heard throughout the entire Discipline Plaza.

With that, it was curtain call for this time's Venom Opera.

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"----"

At the Home of Limbo's cafeteria, Kyousuke was eating with his teammates together just like during lunch when all the students were gathered by team.

Everyone was shoving the "hell roasted sow's meat" into their mouths, looking like they had pulled an all-nighter.

"...Hey, cheer up."

Kyousuke could not help but speak to Renko opposite him.

Because Renko was sprawling on the table, her gas mask was out of view.

Under the flimsy cardigan, her shoulders twitched from time to time while sobbing sounds of "shuko... shuko..." came from under the arms that were covering her face.

"Sob sob, I can't believe I was treated so cruelly... Sob sob sob. I'm so shamed I can't show my face to anyone... Shuko... Shuko!"

"No, but you've never shown your face to begin with. But how should I put this... Umm... D-Don't mind it?"

She had never sounded so frail before, causing Kyousuke to panic.

"...That's enough with the crying and sobbing, okay? You're making the disgusting food even harder to swallow." Even Eiri sounded guilty in contrast to her usual, abrasive attitude.

Basically all of the students who had suffered Busujima's public discipline session were absent. Although they were apparently fine after injected with Busujima's multi-toxin vaccine, they still needed to rest for a while.

With overall student numbers reduced, the cafeteria's noise level had gone down noticeably. Just as Kyousuke searched his mind, wondering what to say to the depressed Renko...

"Excuse me, may I sit here? Pardon my intrusion."

A gentle voice spoke up, not quite matching the atmosphere.

Accompanied by a honey-like fragrance, a girl appeared from behind and sat down next to Kyousuke.

The girl smiled cheerfully towards the surprised faces around her.

"Hello, Kamiya-san, as well as your delightful little companions? Good day. I am Discipline Committee Chair, Syamaya Saki of Year 3 Class A. A pleasure to meet you all."

After greeting them, she even introduced herself with proper manners.

"Delightful little companions?" Eiri frowned. "Oh... N-Nice to meet you!" Maina answered nervously. "...Hmm?" Renko looked up with her gas mask.

"First of all, all of you just finished the Orienteering of the Seven Atonements... You must be very exhausted. Despite the harsh conditions, all of you came back safe and sound. There's nothing more gratifying than that."

Placing her hand on her chest, Syamaya sighed with relief. In front of her was a thick T-bone steak, sizzling on an iron plate, juices flowing out.

A luxurious menu far surpassing the roast meat that Kyousuke and the others were eating.

The difference in position between a Discipline Committee member's and ordinary students' was almost as disparate as heaven and earth.

Using silver cutlery of exquisite craftsmanship, Syamaya was cutting the beef that was grilled to perfection while speaking elegantly. Using plastic chopsticks to pick up a flimsy piece of pork belly, Maina murmured "...th-that looks so yummy", swallowing it.

"Out of everything, the final one-on-one showdown was truly thrilling! Impossible to predict who was going to lose and suffer condemnation... My heart was pounding so fast! Thank you very much for showing me such a splendid contest."

"...Y-You're welcome."

Although it might have been fun for bystanders to watch, as the actual participants, Kyousuke and the others were just barely hanging onto their sanity back then.

Kyousuke really had no idea how to react to her passionate praises.

At least Kyousuke's team won, which was good and all, but the problem was--

"...Really, was it that amusing? Then thank goodness... Foosh."

Her remarks ignored the presence of Renko.

Furthermore, due to losing, Renko had suffered tragic and inhumane treatment merely dozens of minutes earlier.

Renko muttered in a muffled voice without showing any signs of displeasure.

--However.

"Ufufu. Indeed, it was truly wonderful! Especially after the dust settled and you were collapsing on the ground, I... saw glittering tears. In spite of the gas mask you're wearing, I was able to see clearly, you know? So pitiful... I could not help but shed tears myself. The bust that you were proudly displaying at the riverbank this morning, who could've thought it would lead to such a tragedy on the same day? How cruel, how pitiful, how ludicrous... I pity you from the bottom of my heart. Truly too pitiful... Ah, really pitiful."

Syamaya used a handkerchief of white lace to wipe tears from the corner of her eye.

Not only sarcastic but conveying mocking tones in her roundabout manner of speaking, it was unknown whether Syamaya was doing it naturally or on purpose.

The sound of veins popping on a corner of the gas mask could be heard.

Even so, Syamaya remained unfazed. Continuing to wipe her tears, she kept talking nonstop:

"Sob sob... Excuse me. However, the hardship, suffering and shame of this experience is all for leading to a glorious future, to spur you on to cleanse and purify your murky psyches, twisted personalities and corrupted morals, to help you achieve rebirth. Love from the teachers to spur you on! ...Hence, please cheer up, you with the gas mask. I believe that the suffering you experienced will help your filthy soul advance a step towards rehabilitation... Okay, don't cry anymore,

okay? Lift up your sullen face, puff out your chest and hold your head high, move forward! Towards the glorious path to the future known as rebirth!"

"Yes, just go die already."

"...That's right, just go die already."

Renko and Eiri said the same thing without prior planning.

Syamaya had her hands clasped together as though praying, staring into space with glimmering eyes. Rolling her eyes in shock, she began to look troubled and bit her lip hard.

"I see... The two of you are quite severe patients. Under Kamiya-san's corrupting influence... your hearts are extremely twisted, I see."

"Huh? You're blaming me?"

Kyousuke never expected to be targeted without doing anything in the first place...

Syamaya on his left, Eiri on his right, Renko in front--With Kyousuke in the center, the three girls were giving off a tense atmosphere where a fight could break out any moment. This was totally like sitting on a pincushion...

Sitting next to Renko, Maina curled into a ball, going "awawawa."

"Twisted hearts, you say...? In that case, isn't it your heart that's twisted? Before asking people to right themselves, how about you give your own heart a rebirth first?"

Hearing Renko's instigating words, Syamaya's eyebrow shook.

"...My heart, twisted? That sort of thing is absolutely impossible! If you ask why, that is because I am a member of the Discipline Committee. A model student representative that was chosen with the teachers' approval! If any blemishes exist in my heart then the entire Discipline Committee is blemished. And that would become a blemish on the teachers in turn. That is absolutely impossible! Hence,

without a moment's exception, I never forget to maintain a heart of tender love, a soul as pure and noble as the Virgin Mary's, accepting everything with lenient forgiveness, there is nothing I cannot accommodate..."

"Idiot idiot! Syamaya is a moron! Idiot idiot! Retarded, brain-damaged, pig-headed--"

"Indeed, lenient forgiveness, accommodating--Who did you call an idiot!?"

In response to Renko's childish taunts, Syamaya could not help but raise her voice violently.

Renko went "foosh" to laugh triumphantly.

"Oh my oh my oh my~? What's that about 'without a moment's exception, I never forget to maintain a heart of tender love (snicker), a soul as pure and noble as the Virgin Mary's (snicker), accepting everything with lenient forgiveness (snicker), there is nothing I cannot accommodate (snicker)', Syamaya-chan?"

"...Syamaya-chan? U-Ufufu... Please add '-senpai' properly when addressing your senior, okay? Also, do put away your clumsy imitation."

"Oh my oh my. I am so sorry, you know? I am getting too emotional. Please forgive me, Syamaya-chan-senpai! Foosh."

"----"

Syamaya stared at Renko, her expression disappearing from her face.

Hearing Renko's imitation making no effort to "resemble" her, Eiri burst out laughing "...Pu."

"Awawa. Don't laugh, Eiri-chan! Don't laugh--"

"That's right, Akabane-san. Even if Syamaya-chan-senpai prides herself on never forgetting to maintain a heart of tender love (snicker) and a soul as pure and noble as the Virgin Mary's (snicker) without a moment's exception, accepting everything with lenient forgiveness (snicker), with nothing she cannot

accommodate (snicker), a noble (snicker) model student (snicker), there are limits, you know? I'm almost about to rage! Pop pop veins exploding!"

"Puku!? P-Pukuku..."

"----"

Watching Renko's completely outrageous imitation performance, even Maina burst out laughing.

The light disappeared from Syamaya's eyes that were staring at everyone.

She exerted power with her fingertips that were holding the knife...

"Cut it out, you girls! How can you joke around with Senpai--"

"Fu... Ufu... Ufufufufufufu."

Just as Kyousuke tried to intervene, Syamaya began to tremble while her face was down.

Slowly, she looked up with a radiant smile.

A beautiful smile that almost seemed as though it would indiscriminately heal the soul of everyone who witnessed it.

"...Ufufu. You are truly interesting, too amusing. I almost forgot... We must gather again later--However, my humble apologies... It is almost time for me to take my leave. There are still many preparations to do, so I must not dally any further."

As soon as she finished, Syamaya stood up and left the table. Her face was like a mask, her expression unchanging at all.

"...Preparations?" Renko inclined her head.

"Are they preparations for killing us? Foosh."

"Ufufu... How humorous you are. They are for the next event--The preliminary preparations for the Inferno Campfire. We of the Discipline Committee are very

busy. So please enjoy yourselves... Oh my, as a side note, you may have this steak, gas mask. A trivial gift, but please don't be shy and have a try."

Leaving friendly words and a steak behind, Syamaya slowly departed. "Shuko." Renko sighed in front of the meat that had been dissected into little pieces.

"This solid food, I can't eat it with the mask on... Is she making fun of me?"

"Stare~"

"Since it was given to me after all, I guess I'll let Maina have it."

"Really!? Thank you very much! ...What about everyone else?"

"...No thanks."

"...I'll pass... I lost appetite all of a sudden."

After answering, Kyousuke held his stomach.

All this time, he had been suffering from a stomachache due to the tension, worrying whether Syamaya was going to mentally snap any moment. Tormented utterly, Kyousuke looked at Renko and Eiri with resentful eyes.

"Act properly next time, okay? Perhaps you've forgotten, but I'll remind you again just in case... She's killed twenty-one people before, the former Murderer Princess, you know?"

"...Yeah, former. Now she's all rehabilitated."

"That's just self-proclaimed, isn't it? Foosh. She's got a smell that's very similar to me... Just do her the right way a bit more and it seems like she'll make a totally different face."

"Cut it out with the doing, okay?"

Retorting against Renko's dirty joke, Kyousuke began to make a wry expression that read "good grief."

Even though it made Syamaya horrifying and frightening, at least the depressed Renko was back to normal, having her meal energetically now.

Next to Maina who was holding her hands to her face in utter bliss, going "Yumm~, so tender! So juicy...", Renko was slurping jelly.

Eiri's expression also relaxed as she continued her meal, producing a much longed for peaceful atmosphere.

At this time, Kyousuke suddenly remembered the open-jail school's itinerary.

"After that, it's the scheduled campfire... Inferno Campfire huh? I guess it means the fires of hell or purgatory, so it won't be the same as an ordinary campfire, right?"

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A world burning in crimson flames.

Sparks flew all over, tearing darkness apart while acute laughter was defeaning.

"Yahahahahahaha!!!! Dirty things need to be disinfected!!!"

Wielding a massive flamethrower to incinerate the entire village was the towering figure of a guy with a bright red mohawk. Decorated with ear studs, the vicious face was grinning with mad glee.

Fearing the sadistic visitor, the panicking people were escaping in all directions. The Mohican was using merciless flames to baptize not only the village but also the villagers.

"Kyahhhhhhhhhhh!? G-G-G-Grand... daddy!!!"

Hence, right now--

In front of an old man who was getting "disinfected" with a flamethrower, a young girl screamed in despair.

She had probably fallen over while in the middle of escaping. With the old man's body sprawled on the ground before the girl, the violent spewing flames engulfed it, turning it into a fireball.

"Granddaddy... Granddaddy! Uwahhhhhhhhh!"

Losing her precious family right before her eyes, the girl broke into tears.

Large tear drops fell from her eyes. The girl crawled over to the burning remains. The flamethrower was then pointed at her nose.

The girl's shoulders trembled as she looked up in trepidation. Lit by the fire light, the cruel grinning face was looking down at her.

"Eeek!?" The girl cried out and backed away. The Mohican's smile became even more cruel as he moved his finger onto the flamethrower's trigger without hesitation.

"This ends here."

A different voice from the Mohican's suddenly sounded.

"HUH~?" His fun ruined, the Mohican turned around.

Standing there was a youth dressed in a tattered overcoat.

"Who da fuck are ya...? A suicide volunteer for me to burn~?"

"Suicide volunteer? Hell no... I am just a wandering traveler. Roaming these lands, seeking the strong, thirsting for the blood of the strong... Just a nameless murdering volunteer."

Under the lowered hood, the sharp gaze pierced the Mohican.

Hanging on his dangling arm were Mohican heads of various colors--A total of eleven.

"...Hyah?"

The youth tossed the heads at the Mohican who was watching with glazed eyes.

Then he said to the Mohican while he was staring at his dead compatriots:

"You're the only one left. I'm gonna hunt that fucking Mohican head of yours too."

Taking off his hood, the youth revealed vicious eyes, staring intently at his final prey.

"...Ahee!?" The Mohican showed fear for an instant before recovering an intimidating stance.

"Bastard, you dared to do that to my precious Mohican clan... U-Unforgivable! Disinfection at my hands is your only path to redemption! Or else..."

Throwing down the flamethrower, the Mohican grabbed the arm of the stumbling girl who was trying to escape in the confusion. Pulling her arm up, he took out a knife and held it against her throat, grinning:

"I can't guarantee what'll happen to this chick, you know~? Yahaha!"

"....."

The youth's eyes narrowed slightly.

"E-E-Eeeeeeeeeek!? Let me go! Let me go! Please let me go! Let me goooooooooooo!!!"

Caught by the muscular arm, the girl cried while she pleaded.

Looking at the girl's wavering eyes, the youth spoke up in voice that was chilling to the bone.

"Hmph... Retarded. Do you think I'll submit to such lame ass threats? We are now facing century's end when the world is out of wack and order has gone to the dogs. In this society where justice is corrupted, survival of the fittest is the only law. The weak dies and the strong lives, that's how simple the world is. Even if that girl gets killed by you as a hostage, it's none of my fucking business. If you're asking why, that's because I'm a mother fucking murdering volunteer... In this

world where everyone is going to hell, the wandering murderer is the one who'll send every single of them to--Hey, wait a sec, asshole! Fucker... What the fuck are you trying to do to Maina, Mohican?"

Suddenly interrupting his lines, the wandering murderer--Kyousuke--glared intently at Mohican.

In front of his raging gaze, Mohican was pulling at the girl--Maina in a white, one-piece dress--using the chaos as an opportunity to feel her up.

"Yahaha! Girl, you've got such a developed body despite your small size."

"Eeeeeeeeek!? Y-Y-Y-You, what are you doing!? S-Stop it! Stop it... Kyahhhhhhhh!"

No matter how much Maina struggled, she was unable to move anywhere due to having one arm in his clutches.

During this time, Mohican began to toy with various parts of Maina's body.

"Yaha! This klutzy girl is mine!"

"Mohican."

"...Hyaha?"

"Die for real this time!!!!!"

"Kegyoh!?"

Suffering a heavy punch in the nose, Mohican was blown away while the eleven Mohican heads--props made from paper and plasticine--scattered all over the ground. He landed in the flames that surrounded the whole place.

While Mohican was screaming "Hot hot hot hot hot hot!" pitifully, Kurumiya ran over to him.

"Oh no! H-Hurry and put out the fire... Here I go!!!"

"Yaha? Ugyahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

What Kurumiya splashed out forcefully on him... was not water but a large amount of oil.

Turned into a burning effigy, Mohican rolled over the ground.

"...Phew." Kurumiya exhaled in relief, wiping sweat from her brow.

"Looks like I made it. Wonderful."

"Wonderful my ass, Kurumiya-sensei! Pouring oil on fire is not good, okay? Members of the Discipline Committee, hurry! Please put out the fire quickly."

Getting into action at Busujima's directions, the Discipline Committee members took up fire extinguishers and surrounded Mohican, spraying at him together. As hazy white smoke rose, Eiri yawned while observing silently, holding the microphone in one hand. With a voice completely lacking in motivation, she interjected as the narrator.

"...The end. Class A Team 4's performance--The skit Century's End hereby concludes."

The fire scene broke out in applause. Kyousuke and his team were surrounded by the other students who were in turn encircled by a ring of intensely burning flames.

Rather than surrounding the fire, this was a campfire party where the fire surrounded the students.

This was the Inferno Campfire.

Temperature that felt like it was causing burns on the skin, together with hot air that felt like it would scorch the lungs in a single breath.

Pushed to their limits, Kyousuke and his teammates finally finished their "performance" and exhaled in relief.

Kyousuke glanced at Mohican who was now white from head to toe, carried away on a stretcher. He extended a hand towards the exhausted Maina.

"That was tough on you, Maina... Can you stand?"

"Ah... Y-Yeah... I'm so sorry. Auau."

"..Tsk. I was thinking it was rare moment with him acting the part properly... But in the end, just like every time, he never learns his lesson. I really wish he'd never come back."

After converging with Eiri who served as the narrator for the skit, Kyousuke and Maina went back to their assigned positions. With the flames right behind their backs, the heat was no laughing matter at all.

With sweat dripping down like waterfalls, they drank water from bottles to replenish moisture.

In the center, Syamaya was serving as the master of ceremonies.

"Thank you very much, everyone from Class A Team 4. You've made a grand display of a wandering murderer's taste for cruelty and sadism. As expected of authentic murderers! ...Well then, up next is the final team. Class B Team 4--"

--SATSUJIN RAP.[1]

Syamaya announced.

Then suddenly, highly rhythmic drumming could be heard from somewhere.

Dressed in gym clothes, four students stood up abruptly together, clapping their hands with the beat while walking to the center of the fire-encircled space.

--Don, don, cha! Don, don, cha!

Then bass noises were mixed in, but the musical instruments were not present anywhere.

Except that one of the four students--a girl wearing a black gas mask--had the microphone to her mouthpiece. Drum and bass sounds were apparently coming from there.

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[1] SATSUJIN is Japanese for killing/murder

Human beatboxing. Using just a person's mouth and nose to imitate all sorts of tone colors and effects, a greatly varied method of performance and a high-level voice technique.

Soon, the quartet arrived at the center of the stage. After an intense performance, the music stopped with a sound as though the machinery had halted forcibly and the quartet's movements instantly stopped.

After a moment's silence, "shukooooooo..." breathing was heard.

Renko raised her middle finger to Kyousuke and the rest of the audience.

"Let's kill."

--She said. In the next instant...

A storm of sounds erupted, engulfing the fiery scene.

Powerful drumming and intense bass that the listener would mistake for real instruments playing. Intersecting playing, intersecting tone colors. The still quartet sprang into action explosively.

From among them, the first was Renko who flew out and began to rap:

"Yo! Embrace of scorching flames, enter stage! Black mask GMK! Raising a ruckus in busy streets, psychopath has arrived! On first sight, no one will survive! Rhyming lyrics sharper than knives! Listen to us sing live! Wanna get killed no take down, come on!"

Taunting the audience by raising her middle finger a few times, Renko--GMK--returned among the quartet and began to dance again. Every motion was so refined that it was unbearably cool.

Then a giant girl stepped out for the next performance.

Covered by a brown paper bag, she shook the ground as she stomped, singing in a bass voice that contrasted sharply with GMK.

"Hey! Earth shaking, grand entrance, y'all! Sweep away, so, a grand disaster, y'all! Fat sack Bob, y'all! Megaton destruction, y'all! Complex face, hidden by bag, y'all! HAHA! Laugh at me and I'll cut y'all, cut y'all! DON! Don don don don, crush them all! Juggernaut will sweep away all! Sweep away your hearts, y'all!?"

After making full use of her giant body and displaying massive vigor, Bob--Sack Bob--returned to the quartet.

Then came a swiftly flowing change in MC.

In direct contrast to Bob, a quiet and petite girl went up.

With a tongue as bright red as her eyes, she licked her lips and sang in a dry, mosquito-like voice:

"Yo! Everyone gets eaten, eaten! Chikachiiro's cannibal rhythms! Dangerous and cannibal! Now, let's start the carnival! Scares Hannibal livid! Everyone burning passionately with reckless abandon! Hypnotic rhythm stealing your heart! Your flesh, stealing my heart!"

Chihiro--Chikachiiro--bared her dazzling and sharp double-teeth in direct contrast to her cute voice.

With her gaze stuck to Kyousuke's body, the lyrics sounded extra scary and horrifying...

But guided by GMK's furious human beatboxing, the crowd was totally charmed by the rapping performance by the time one noticed.

Spontaneously, many students raised their fists and began to chant together.

"SATSUJIN! SATSUJIN!"

"Yeah! Stab to death, bludgeon to death, strangle to death, poison to death! Stop, stop, your heartbeats!"

"SATSUJIN! SATSUJIN!"

"Come on! Shot to death, crushed to death, drowned to death, burned to death! Stop, stop, our heartbeats!"

From an educational point of view, Kyousuke was at total loss for words regarding the glorification of murder in a school meant to reform murderers...

Whatever. The crowd's passion was totally stoked.

As a side note, when it came to the turn of the final teammate Makiyouin Kuuga in other words, he did not perform a solo rap. Instead, all he did was sway to the music.

Kyousuke had no idea what was the point of his presence, but from a spectator's point of view, Michirou did look a bit like a dancer. Incredible. Even the flames behind them were stoked, illuminating the quartet's figures like shadowgraph.

--Soon after.

"....FUCK YOU."

The quartet ended their performance with raised middle fingers. After a while, GMK and her troupe received a massive round of applause and cheering, having finished their song. Once the students' excited clapping stopped...

"..." Suddenly slightly, GMK's body swayed...

...Swaying swaying swaying~~~~~~, crash!

She collapsed on the spot.

"GMK!?"

The students' screams all overlapped and were deafening.

Fallen over backwards, GMK--Renko--panted "shuko... shuko..." but did not show any signs of getting up.

Kurumiya jogged over to check Renko's condition then sighed in exasperation.

Swinging her metal pipe downwards at the students worrying about GMK's health, she explained:

"...Heat stroke. This looks like the result of going nuts without taking off the mask in this hot hell hole."

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After Renko was taken away on a stretcher, the Inferno Campfire continued without delay. Using death voice to sing the school song, enduring hardship called recreation, also watching the Discipline Committee's Inferno Fire Dance performance...

Finally, it came to the last event.

Utterly exhausted, the students braced themselves...

For the extremely ordinary folk dancing.

Following the familiar middle tempo music, everyone gathered in a circle and started to dance.

Nothing particularly special, it really was an ordinary folk dance. The teachers and Discipline Committee members also joined in as opposite genders held hands and danced away harmoniously.

"...Yawn."

Among them was a girl yawning while she walked, arms crossed in overt protest. To be honest, it was Akabane Eiri.

The boy assigned as Eiri's dance partner felt extremely awkward, intimidated by her direct glare, going off in puzzlement to find another partner. This happened repeatedly, quite a heart breaking sight.

Right now, Eiri uncrossed her arms and rubbed her eyes with her right hand.

"What are you doing? Let's dance."

Her next partner was Kyousuke. Without hesitation, he grabbed her right hand that she was using to rub her eyes.

Eiri's body shook as she looked at Kyousuke in reaction.

"..."

Eiri instantly wanted to shake off his hand but Kyousuke gripped even tighter.

Her decorated nails sunk into Kyousuke's palm.

--But that was all. Kyousuke's hand did not get sliced off by the blades equipped at the tips of her fingernails.

As an assassin, Eiri had concealed blades disguised under her nail art, but they were no longer equipped at the moment. Three months earlier, the weapons she had exposed when rescuing Kyousuke from convicted murderers were no longer usable.

Eiri had said that the instant hidden weapons are exposed as hidden weapons, they have already lost their value as hidden weapons.

Even so, the feeling of being armed probably still lingered. After Kyousuke grabbed her hand, Eiri looked down and began to panic, glaring at Kyousuke with her half-closed eyes while he was smiling wryly.

"...What?"

Kyousuke gazed back over his shoulder at the eyes glaring at him and answered:

"No, I just find you very innocent."

"...Huh? What's that supposed to mean, are you picking a fight?"

"Of course not. I'm saying you're very cute."

"...!?"

Eiri's face instantly went red. Her angry face relaxed from happiness--just as Kyousuke was about to think that, she instantly scowled with displeasure and turned her face away, going "hmph."

"...W-What are you talking about? Are you stupid? You're acting like a sissy."

Staring at the ground, she whispered violently.

"L-Like a sissy... That's not a nice thing to say."

"...What? I'm just telling the truth."

Their conversation ended in a few exchanges. Then silently, they resumed dancing.

With the flames' heat filling the surroundings, Eiri's soft fingers gradually heated up, getting moist from sweat.

Under the starry sky, illuminated orange-red, this heavy duration lasted no more than twenty seconds.

"Then see you later, okay?"

Kyousuke took a light bow and went to swap partners. Just as he let go...

"...Sorry, Kyousuke."

Eiri spoke in a barely audible whisper.

"...Huh? W-What--"

Even though Kyousuke looked back to ask, he was not allowed to speak further. As he took his next partner's hand, he turned his gaze towards Eiri.

Eiri crossed her arms again, giving off a "Don't talk to me" aura.

"Fufu. Good evening, Eiri-san. Care to dance with me?"

"I. RE. FUSE."

"Aphhhhh!?"

As the smiling dance partner--Shinji--extended his hand, she delivered a kick to his groin with full force.

Holding his kicked crotch, Shinji collapsed on the ground.

"...Tsk." Eiri clicked her tongue in annoyance and walked away on her own. In order to avoid eye contact with Kyousuke, she stared off into the distance, a displeased expression still visible from the side of her face.

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"Hot!"

After the Inferno Campfire ended, it was bath time.

Dipping his foot into the tub, Kyousuke instantly jumped from the heat.

The tip of his toe was stinging, possibly scalded.

The bathwater was sixty-six degrees Celsius. Kyousuke gave up on entering the tub for now and tried the shower this time. The result was still the same terrifying hot water, so scalding that it twisted his body.

Standing in the center of the massive bath hall, Kyousuke was out of options.

"...What should I do?"

Despite his sweat was flowing like waterfalls, because the bathwater was too hot, even taking a comfortable bath was impossible. In any case, I'll soak the towel in hot water first then wipe my body--Just as Kyousuke was thinking that and turning to the tub again...

"Hello hello~, excuse me."

The sliding door at the entrance was pulled open with a clatter as someone entered.

A clear, soprano voice. Unmistakably a girl's voice. However, this was not a mixed bath, of course.

And Kyousuke had heard this voice before. Even though three months had passed since he last heard it, the memory was still fresh in his mind.

The upbeat voice was reminiscent of untainted glass or a frozen glacier.

It was not a muffled voice. Truly very beautiful, the voice made one's hairs all stand on end.

His body stiffening, Kyousuke could feel his blood rushing to his face all at once.

...A nasty sense of foreboding, incomparably annoying.

Kyousuke turned around stiffly. Appearing over there was--

"Yahoo, Kyousuke. Sorry for making you wait! I am cute little Renko-chan~ Fufufu."

So beautiful a face it was surreal, she was standing there without her gas mask.

Wrapped in only a towel, her body was minimally dressed.

"W-What are you doing here!? This is the men's bath, right!?"

Her silver hair coiled up and secured on her head, Renko smiled radiantly while staring at Kyousuke who was fully nude and simply covering the critical part with a wash bowl.

Refreshing sounds of laughter were emitted from those beautiful cherry lips without interference from a ventilator.

"Fufu. If you ask me why, isn't the answer obvious? ...A rare chance for private time, just the two of us, of course it's for doing things that only two people can do privately."

Renko's seductive words resounded all over the cavernous bath.

Because students were let into the bath one room at a time, Kyousuke was alone due to being assigned a single room.

Also, Kyousuke was the only one whom Renko was unable to feel murderous intent towards.

In other words, supposing she was alone with Kyousuke, even if the gas mask serving as her limiter was taken off, Renko would not engage in killing behavior.

"Having taken the trouble to ask Kurumiya-san to take off the mask, that's double the reason why I don't want to waste this opportunity, you know? So enjoy this properly for me... Be enthralled by my charms. Not from the heart but from the body. Fufufu."

"....."

That Kurumiya bitch. Kyousuke cursed with hatred.

--She must have taken off the limiter deliberately because she expected this to happen!

Wrapped in nothing but a flimsy towel, the attractiveness of her body was almost dizzying. Even if he tried to turn his gaze away, he was unable to overcome that irresistible force of attraction.

The voluptuous bosom needed no mentioning. The body's curves, tracing out steep slopes, the pale skin that rivaled the bath towel's fabric, a face that gathered a hundred times more charm in one body; they all constituted flawlessly perfect beauty of form...

"Urgh.... D-Don't come over!"

Kyousuke turned and escaped from Renko's side, jumping into the tub behind him.

With a violent splash, intense pain attacked his entire body at the same time.

Kyousuke gritted his teeth and endured. Despite the feeling like being roasted in a fire, thanks to that, the troubling thoughts and feelings that kept surfacing in his mind also disappeared completely.

Keeping his back towards Renko, Kyousuke closed his eyes while sitting in the bathtub.

"...What are you doing? Jumping into the tub is a violation of etiquette, you know? You need to scoop up bathwater to rinse your body first before slowly lowering yourself into the water."

Kyousuke could hear Renko pick up the wash bowl he had dropped then slowly entering the water.

Renko did not show any signs of feeling scalded, submerging her body into the bathwater just like that. Then she approached Kyousuke who was making calm ripples while reciting the Heart Sutra.

"ārya-avalokiteśvaro bodhisattvo gambhīrāṃ prajñāpāramitā caryāṃ caramāṇo vyavalokayati sma--"

"Seriously... There's no need to be so afraid. It's not like I'll suddenly attack or eat you. The process is very important for this kind of thing, right? First we need to shrink our distance, right? Both between our hearts and our bodies..."

Directly behind Kyousuke, the sound of something taken off could be heard.

...What was it? Duh. The only thing wrapped around Renko's body was that flimsy towel. With that taken off, it could only mean--

"...!?"

Instantly, the troublesome thoughts that had been dispelled by the bathwater's temperature were revived once more, surging forth like boiling water.

His heart pounded uncontrollably. He really wanted to turn around. Turn around immediately.

Even so, Kyousuke still barely hung on to his sanity, closing his eyelids even more forcefully. Then behind him...

"Mugyu."

"Ugyahhhhhh!?"

--Renko had hugged him.

Renko laughed mischievously at Kyousuke who could not suppress his scream.

"Fufu. With this, our bodies are now at zero distance... How is it? Does it feel good? It must feel very good. If I rub back and forth on your back, it'll feel even better... Then after that, the sounds of your intense heartbeats will be transmitted back... Thump... Thump... Ah... I really want to make your heart stop as soon as possible! I don't want to let anyone else have it. Apart from me, no one at all. I will personally... stop your heart, okay?"

Whispering in his ear, Renko applied more strength in her arms.

Kyousuke's neck was firmly secured by the arms hugging him from behind, while his back felt like it was going to break from the pressure.

Having lost all obstructions, Renko's breasts were unbelievably soft and pleasurable to touch, blowing his rationality away all at once... Crap. At this rate, his sanity was really going to disappear.

Suddenly, knocking Renko away to make her unable to resist--As much as Kyousuke considered that, his stiff body was unable to move. A breath blew into Kyousuke's ear as Renko's flirtatious whispers were heard.

"Hey Kyousuke... My body feels so hot. Maybe the remnants of Busujima-san's poison still remains? It hurts inside my body... With my beloved's naked skin before me, this kind of feeling is getting stronger and stronger. My mind is about to go wild..."

As soon as she spoke, Renko's body began to move.

Pressed tightly against Kyousuke's back, her naked breasts slowly rubbed against him.

Pressed together, the two voluptuous bulges were changing shape in the shallows of his back muscles, sliding up and down, left and right.

Pressing her face against him in addition to her breasts, Renko exhaled seductively.

"Ah... So hot... Stop... Stop this now, Kyousuke... Use your hand, hurry..!"

"----"

Faced with Renko's desire, Kyousuke had nothing to say. Amidst his silence, Renko's breath gradually grew more and more irregular, the rate of her body's movement was also increasing, and the tips of the bulges rubbing against his back--

(Oh man... I'm reaching my limit. Perhaps I'm gonna die here.)

Hence, Kyousuke finally exploded.

Losing light, his eyes rolled up to the ceiling while a faint smile appeared on the corners of his lips.

--Fresh blood spurted out.

A wall near the bath tub was dyed bright red.

Limbs relaxed, Kyousuke floated in the water.

Bright red blood was leaking in the bathwater near his submerged face.

"Kyousuke!? Uwahhhhhh, Kyousuke... Kyousuke... collapsed from a nosebleed!"

Renko's screams sounded very distant.

Kyousuke's face was still in the water, his nosebleeding continuing nonstop, his consciousness rapidly going hazy. Renko hastily picked up Kyousuke in her arms and placed him outside the tub.

At this moment, Kyousuke's face was pressed into the naked bosom.

"--Pfffff!?"

"Kyousuke!!!!!!!?"

A large amount of bleeding followed by a scream.

Kyousuke's memories were cut off here.

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"Suffering like this, jeez..."

Dozens of minutes later, Kyousuke had regained consciousness without issue and walked out of the infirmary along the deserted corridor leading to his room. While adjusting the gauze stuffed up his nostrils, he grumbled.

"That girl Renko, she's going way too far... Can't she behave herself a bit?"

As soon as he said that, what happened in the bath began to surface vividly in his mind...

"No no no, I'm not allowed to recall it! If I lose anymore blood, it'll be a problem."

He shook his head forcefully, dispelling the image from his mind.

Who knew how exaggerated a volume of blood he lost. Right now there was a slight anemic feeling.

Wanting to sleep as early as possible, Kyousuke quickened his pace. Just at this time...

"Oh my oh my oh my~? Why isn't this Kamiya-san just out of the bath!?"

Emerging from a turn in the corridor near the stairs was a bunch of annoying fools.

The trio of Shinji, Usami and Oonogi. Dressed in uniform, holding gym clothes and towels under their arms. Oonogi rapidly moved to surround Kyousuke between the three of them.

"Yo Kamiya. How rare to see you alone. And what's up with pluggin' your nose? You couldn't take the heat from the bathwater and had a nose bleed? Hahaha, that's so lame! What a piece of work you are, hahahaha!"

"H-Heehee... Eat liver if you're anemic... Dig your liver out and eat it... H-Heeheehee."

Pointing at the gauze stuffing Kyousuke's nose, Oonogi roared with laughter while Usami touched Kyousuke where his liver was.

"Oh my, thank you, thank you, we received so much care from you during the Orienteering of the Seven Atonements. My, really quite a lot... Fufufu. Was your bath good?"

Shinji was smiling but there was no smile in his eyes at all.

Beaten up twice during the Orienteering event, they had ended up losing their Deadly Sins Card and suffering Busujima's disciplining. Furthermore, Shinji even received a kick in the groin from Eiri. As a result, Kyousuke expected him to have quite a lot of resentment built up.

(T-That's bad... These assholes, they're totally seething with killing intent, what the fuck...)

Just recently dried, Kyousuke's hair was a little rough. Kyousuke forced a friendly smile.

"Y-Yeah... The bathwater is really nice, except it's super hot. You guys be careful not to get scalded, okay? I'll be going this way, so goodbye now--"

"Come on, don't be in such a hurry~"

Despite Kyousuke's efforts to escape, the trio would not let him go so easily.

To his left and right were the wall and Oonogi while he had Shinji and Usami on his front and back. Kyousuke felt his heart rate beginning to rise.

"Hey man... Bath time is about to end, you know?"

"Don't worry, Kamiya-san. It'll be over soon... Fufu."

Saying that, Shinji passed his gym shirt over to Oonogi.

With both hands freed, he held the two ends of his towel and attacked the frozen Kyousuke's neck.

"I promised Eiri-san not to make a move, right? But speaking of moves... Eh."

With the towel crossed around Kyousuke's neck, the strangler narrowed his light-brown eyes.

--Crap, he acted faster than I could realize his intentions. Just as Shinji exerted force on his hands that were gripping the towel tightly...

"What are you doing?"

A sudden voice caused everyone to stay still.

Kyousuke looked to see that directly behind Shinji, really just separated by a small distance, a girl with a head of honey-colored hair was standing there. Let alone her presence, Kyousuke had not even noticed how she approached.

It was almost as though she had appeared suddenly during the few seconds just as Kyousuke and the others had their attention drawn to Shinji's hands.

"Wah!?"

Greatly surprised, Shinji released the towel and jumped away.

Moving nimbly, the girl--a beauty with the words "Discipline Committee Member" on a worn yellow armband--stepped in front of Shinji as though shielding Kyousuke.

"Good evening, first-year students. Greetings. I am Discipline Committee Chair Syamaya Saki from Year 3 Class A. A pleasure to meet you all."

"Syamaya-senpai..."

In response to Kyousuke's wide-eyed staring, Syamaya smiled with composure.

"Hello, Kamiya-san. Are these your friends?"

Her gaze swept over Shinji, Oonogi and Usami in sequence.

"Eh? Oh, no... Rather than friends, umm... How should I put it--"

"Best friends! We are best friends! Fufufu."

As Kyousuke stuttered, Shinji frantically told a big fat lie.

Seeing Syamaya express doubt "...Best friends huh?", Shinji went "Indeed!" and nodded vigorously, smiling cordially at the same time.

"Nice to meet you, Senpai. Kamiya-san and I are in the same class. I am Year 1 Class A's Saotome Shinji. By the way, you're really pretty, Senpai! Because you're too pretty, for an instant I almost mistook you for a goddess."

"Well..."

Syamaya had joy written all over her face in response to Shinji who was flashing a grin of pure white teeth.

...That asshole Shinji, I can't believe he's flirting even at a time like this.

Then Oonogi jumped on the bandwagong too.

"I am Kamiya's good friend too! Super good friend Oonogi Arata! Hello, Syamaya-senpai!"

Introducing himself, he smiled sycophantically and slovenly.

The mood in the corridor changed dramatically, turning all peaceful.

"Ufufu. Is that so? Getting along is a good thing."

Smiling Syamaya nodded with satisfaction

Then as though suddenly recalling something, using "by the way..." as a transition, she continued:

"Why were you strangling your best friend's neck?"

--Instantly, the quality of her voice changed dramatically.

The air grew tense again. Although her tone of voice was identical to before, still so gentle, it felt inexplicably intimidating. Shinji and Oonogi's smiles were frozen.

"Eh? N-No, Senpai... Why would I strangle my best friend's--"

"You did it, yes?"

"...Yes, yes I did. But it was more like a prank--"

"But you strangled Kamiya-san's neck, yes?"

"...Yes, indeed."

Equivocating, Shinji was totally subdued, his gaze began to wander.

Syamaya placed her left hand on her waist and raised her right index finger.

"Listen carefully, Saotome-san. No matter the reason, the fact that you are strangling Kyousuke-san's neck... That is a problem in behavior rather than motive. Please show self-restraint, self-discipline and self-caution! Seeing as it is your first offense, I shall let you off this time... But just this once. If you ever do anything of this sort, I shall deal with you according to the rules, okay? --Understood?"

Accepting the subtle message in her lecture, Shinji bowed and went "...I'm very sorry."

Syamaya lowered her hands and nodded with satisfaction.

"Ufufu. It's good that you understand. Violence is not allowed... Yes, violence is not allowed. No matter what kind of reason--"

"H-Heehee... Senpai's panties... Even the Discipline Committee wears black stripes too... Heeheehee."

At this moment, having circled behind Syamaya, Usami was flipping her skirt.

The skirt was lifted so outrageously high that even Kyousuke could see clearly from his angle. Usami leaned his face in--

"Gwah!?"

Instantly, the sole of an indoor shoe was buried into Usami's face.

Usami's short body was blown away with bloody froth splattering.

Only after rolling a dozen meters in the corridor did he finally stop.

--The air instantly went still.

"...S-Syamaya-senpai?"

Staying clear of the kicked Usami's trajectory, still pressed against the wall, Kyousuke turned his gaze over.

Readjusting her posture as though nothing had happened, withdrawing the left leg that had been swung with an extremely threatening speed, Syamaya stood silently for a while. Then dry laughter of "ufufu" leaked from her lips.

"...Ara? Ara ara ara~? How careless of me, a reflexive action... Sorry, I meant no harm. No harm at all!"

Usami was lying face up on the ground, his broken nose bleeding from the kick, his body convulsing, rendered splendidly unconscious. The force of this back kick was absolutely phenomenal.

Syamaya turned to Shinji and Oonogoi who had gone "Eeek!?" in fright, trying to explain:

"Because he stood behind me without saying a word... Because of an incorrigible reflex habit, for an instant, I was compelled to eliminate him which is why... In other words, it was an accident just now! I'll have you know that it was an accident! Assuredly not behavior resorting to violence! So..."

"But Senpai.. Didn't you say that, no matter what kind of reason--"

"--What did you say?"

"Eek!? N-N-N-N-N-Nothing at all!"

Originally intending to argue, Shinji jumped towards Oonogi all at once. As though trying to console the two boys who were huddled together trembling, Syamaya spoke gently:

"No need to be afraid, don't worry! Indeed, I used to be the Murderer Princess but I've been rehabilitated now. Let alone killing people, I won't even eat people, so I shall never resort to violence while acting under my own will! I won't hang people upside and slice them up alive, I won't use electric drills to hollow out the skull, I won't pour hydrochloric acid into the insides. I won't drain off the blood, dismember the body for preservation to make the human meunière or a human cutlet for savoring and the purposes of corpse disposal! Henceforth, henceforth--"

"W-W-W-W-W-W-W-We're so sorry!!!!!"

"...What?"

Shinji and Oonogi were trembling nonstop and prostrating in dogeza style while Syamaya started to narrate in some kind of frenzied voice. Then rushing past Syamaya at full speed, they picked up Usami and fled for their lives.

"S-Such terrible manners... I clearly explained that I was not going to do anything. What poor upbringing they demonstrate!"

Even though Syamaya was getting angry with her arms akimbo, Shinji and Oonogi's reaction was only natural.

Circumstances permitting, there was nothing Kyousuke wanted more than leaving this place right now.

(What do you mean, incorrigible reflex habit... Scary. She's already on the level of professional killers. Just as I thought, her past crimes are really very bad. I really don't wanna get deeply involved with her...)

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"What a disaster, Kamiya-san."

Walking next to Kyousuke, Syamaya spoke with care and concern.

Syamaya suggested walking Kyousuke to his room, so they were now on their way.

"Good grief..." Smiling wryly, Kyousuke secretly sighed.

Speaking of disaster, the current situation was the real disaster.

(...She's not gonna do anything to me, right? After all, she's the Discipline Committee Chair, so I don't need to worry... Right?)

Recalling what just happened earlier, he kept sneaking inconspicuous glances at Syamaya every now and then.

The corridor was devoid of other people, quiet all around. Perhaps it was his imagination, but it felt like Syamaya had deliberately taken the far route, passing through deserted areas--

"Kamiya Kyousuke-san."

"Y-Yes!?"

Suddenly called out by full name, his answer turned into a question.

Her emerald eyes resembled gemstones as she scrutinized Kyousuke.

"...!?"

Those clear eyes blinked while Kyousuke held his breath.

"You have... killed twelve people, haven't you?"

That was what she asked. Although her voice was gentle as always, her tone of voice carried doubt.

As though she were asking--Did you really kill twelve people?

"Yeah. I did, but... why are you suddenly asking this?"

Sweat drenching his back, Kyousuke asked in return.

Although he had killed no one in actual fact, he could only tell his closest friends that he was forced by false charges to enroll. Neither did he intend to publicize it.

"...No." Hearing Kyousuke's attempt to deceive, Syamaya cocked her head.

"The kill count is surprisingly high, almost making one doubt its veracity. For example, you haven't made any strange moves even while walking in this deserted place."

Saying that, Syamaya sighed. Just as thought, this route was deliberately chosen. Rather than wanting to make a move on Kyousuke, she was checking to see if Kyousuke would make a move on her.

A little surprised, Kyousuke turned to look at the side of Syamaya's face.

The girl who had killed twenty-one--the Murderer Princess--was staring ahead with those clear eyes of hers.

Escaping her lips were what sounded like murmurs:

"Supposedly, people who commit unusual crimes like mass murders almost inevitably come from growing up in abnormal environments. Excessive abuse or chastising, physical violence, sexual violence, lack of love... Abnormal minds cultivated under such abnormal family environments, resulting in abnormal behavior, apparently. In actual fact, this school has apparently accepted many notorious murderers. After hearing their recollections, even I have experienced virtually unbearable shame as just the listener."

However--Syamaya placed her hand on her chest and continued:

"I am different. I was born and raised in an ordinary family. A pure Japanese father and a French-American mother... They had a loving relationship and lavished me with affection as the only child. Although my parents were always busy with work, resulting in frequent business trips or moving houses... Whenever it was my birthday, they always took a day off to celebrate for me. I always feel that they were impeccable parents. Hence, I received a wholesome education with good interpersonal relationships. Truly... They were lovely people."

Syamaya recollected with closed eyes, showing a peaceful expression while expressing her love for her family.

She was scary precisely because of that. Kyousuke had heard from Kurumiya's anecdotes when setting off that even Syamaya's parents had fallen victim to her hands.

It would be understandable if she grew up in an abnormal environment.

But Syamaya said that the environment was normal. Very normal, even impeccable.

...Then why? What made Syamaya become twisted enough to walk along the path of murder?

Kyousuke was just about to blurt out this question when Syamaya smiled with understanding.

"Before that, allow me to ask a question. Do you love your family?"

"Hmm..."

The instant Kyousuke heard the question, a young girl appeared in his mind.

After so much happening, he had not seen her for half a year. Nevertheless, her figure, voice, movements, scent, the taste of her cooking, her smile, everything was still so vivid.

The more separated they were, the more Kyousuke felt how strongly he cherished her.

"...Yes, I love my family. Like yours, Syamaya-senpai, my parents are crazy busy. But there's a younger sister who accompanied me all the time. I cherish her more than anything else."

"Aha, is that so? You have a sister complex."

"Haha... Maybe so. I'm always causing her trouble and can't hold my head up in front of her."

As a side note, Kyousuke's face relaxed. Thinking about it, this was his first time in this school conversing about the topic of family. Like what Syamaya said, both of them had their own heart wrenching experiences...

Born and raised in ordinary families like Syamaya's or Kyousuke's, there must be no more than a handful.

"Ufufu. Looks like the two of us are very similar."

Perhaps Syamaya was thinking the same thing, smiling as she spoke.

"W-What do you mean, similar..."

--Even as a joke, gimme a break with this kind of thing.

Although both of them grew up in ordinary families, Kyousuke had fundamental difference from Syamaya the Murderer Princess who had killed twenty-one. That being said, he could not tell her the truth...

With shining eyes, Syamaya gazed at the helpless Kyousuke in a pleading manner.

"Kamiya-san... I have taken an interest in you. I can feel something different about you compared to everyone else. I want to understand you more... I hope you'll tell me more."

"----"

Kyousuke was frozen, speechless.

After staring silently for a brief moment, Syamaya turned her gaze away.

"...That being said, it's time for good boys to sleep."

By the time he noticed, they had already reached a single room--Kyousuke's room.

"I shall be taking a bath too, so this is where we part. Goodbye?"

"Oh... O-Okay! Thank you so much for walking me all the way here."

Syamaya smiled radiantly at Kyousuke who was bowing his head awkwardly.

"No need for thanks. Ufufu... Let us chat again another time? I am looking forward to it. Please rest your body properly tonight. Do your best again tomorrow. Goodnight, Kamiya-san, sweet dreams--"

Lifting the hem of her skirt for a curtsy, she left casually. Seeing her out of sight and her footsteps no longer in earshot, Kyousuke's body finally went limp.

"Huff... I can't believe I was alone with a serial killer, just give me a fucking break. This must be shaving years off my life."

Especially scary was after she asked him "Did you really kill twelve people?" ...But in any case, things were over for now at least.

But on the other hand, she seemed to have acquired a mysterious interest in him.

Ultimately, he still did not know Syamaya's reasons for murder.

"Say, there's still two more days to this... With the first day being so tough, I really hope it's not gonna escalate from here on, I don't want to encounter more troublesome things!"

Kyousuke lay down on his bed after praying.

His body and mind reaching their limits together, Kyousuke rapidly slipped into dream land--

The Open-Jail School of the Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation.

Without incident(?), a hellish first day was finally over.

Day 2 Purgatory - Peace Breaker, Trouble Maker / "Unbreakable Breakdown"

Unbreakable Breakdown
ピースブレイク・トラブルメーカー
煉獄の二日目
04:30 RISE AND SHINE
05:00 MORNING PENAL LABOR
09:30 LUGGAGE PACKING, CLEANING
BOTH YOUR ROOM AND YOUR HEART HAVE TO BE CLEANER THAN WHEN YOU ARRIVED!
10:40 OUTDOOR COOKING
DARE TO HURT OTHERS AND YOU'LL BE TURNED INTO INGREDIENTS FOR CURRY.
14:00 A WALK IN THE SEA OF TREES
FEEL FREE TO COMMIT SUICIDE IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT.
16:30 PIRANHA CATCHING CONTEST
19:30 HEART ATTACK COURAGE TEST
TAKE CARE THAT YOU DON'T TURN INTO A GHOST YOURSELF.
20:30 THE GRAND MIXED BATH PARTY
22:00 LOCKED UP, LIGHTS OUT

The second morning arrived, continuing the sunny weather from yesterday.

After getting up, it was time for harsh penal labor undertaken out in nature--picking up forest trash, washing clothes at the waterfall, climbing a cliff while weeding, repairing rope bridges over ravines, massaging Kurumiya's legs. After finishing all that, Kyousuke and the rest were finally able to sit down for breakfast.

The first-years' breakfast consisted of sloppy "leftovers" made from the previous day's offerings.

In contrast, the menu for teaching staff and Discipline Committee members...

"Good morning, freshmen. Thank you for your efforts in the morning penal labor."

Smiling radiantly like sunshine, she came over to Kyousuke's table and put down the plate in her hand. On the pristine plate of pure white, there were freshly baked croissants, a half-cooked omelette, fresh ham salad, a very sumptuous selection.

A luxurious breakfast served buffet-style centered on western cooking. A great variety of food was arranged on a white cross-shaped table.

Kyousuke and the other first-years were not even allowed to touch it at all.

"L-Looks so yummy..."

The various things resembling fried rice fell from Maina's spoon as she salivated. The stomachs of Kyousuke and the others also rumbled.

"Ara ara, ufufu. This adorably little lady, may I sit by your side?"

Syamaya smiled and sat down directly opposite to Kyousuke--the seat on Maina's right.

Kyousuke was flanked by Renko and Eiri on his left and right respectively. Ever since early morning, they had been engaged in a bitter dispute over the matter of boobs.

Although the two of them looked over for an instant at Syamaya's arrival, they immediately turned their heads back and continued their dialogue as though nothing had happened. Syamaya's expression went stiff.

"I-I would hope you could greet me at least... Oh well, no matter."

Saying that, she took an elegant sip of cappuccino, then said to the nervous Maina:

"Speaking of which, I still haven't asked yet. May I know your name?"

"Eh!? Oh, umm... I-I am... Igarachi, Mainya!"

"Oh my! What a wonderful name, 'Igarachi Mainya'-san. Ufufu."

"Ehhhhh!? O-Oh nyo... I-I am... Igarachi... Igarashi Myai... Mainya... Igarashi Maina, heah! Auau."

"Ara, I see. My apologies... By the way, are you okay? You don't seem to be speaking too fluently."

"Your brain doesn't seem to be too fluent."

"--What did you say?"

"Nothing."

As Eiri coldly turned her face away, Syamaya glared viciously at her.

But immediately, she coughed dryly once and recovered.

"Say, Kamiya-san. Did you sleep well last night? It felt unbearably hot for me and I woke a number of times. Thanks to that, my skin today--"

"Hey hey hey hey, Kyousuke, look at the skin on my face! Clearly without any makeup, it's still very pretty, right!? Foosh. Unlike a certain elderly upperclassman, my skin is delicate, tight and very transparent! Like a baby's. Bubuu~ Kyousuke, praise me now~"

"It's totally not evident on account of the gas mask! As for baby, that refers to your mental age rather than the age of your skin, right?"

Syamaya smiled and gnashed her teeth at Renko's interruption. As she stabbed a wiener with her fork, Maina went "Eeeek!" in fright.

"..."

Kyousuke was also shrinking away in fright. There were no smiles in Renko and Eiri's eyes at all.

The glimpses that Syamaya had exhibited last night as the Murderer Princess were flashing in Kyousuke's mind.

"H-Hey... You girls shouldn't be treating Senpai like this--"

"Smile."

"Fuck smiling."

"Look, Eiri, boobs!"

"I'm gonna kill you."

"Look, Kyousuke, boobs!"

"Stop going boobs... Hey, don't press them against me!"

"You two, just go die already."

"...Sigh."

Watching Kyousuke and the others acting like morons, Syamaya sighed.

Turning towards Maina again, she spoke like a mother talking to a child.

"Never mind. Igarashi-san... You mustn't become like those people, okay? You are a very good girl, so don't get corrupted by bad influence."

"Oh, okay... Th-Thank you so much..."

"Yes. Please feel free to talk to me if anything troubles you, okay?"

Syamaya stroked Maina's head contentedly with a radiant smile.

She had apparently decided to start with winning Maina over, paying no more attention to Renko and Eiri.

Initially very nervous, Maina gradually relaxed towards Syamaya who was gentle and kind on the surface. By the time they finished eating, they were still chatting and laughing amiably together.

"Oh, is that so? While you were washing clothes at the waterfall, a giant crocodile appeared... Now that's truly a disaster. It was apparently Busujima-sensei's friend. You didn't get hurt, did you, Igarashi-san?"

"Yes, I'm fine now, although the laundry was eaten. It even included panties."

"Ara ara, don't worry about this. Everyone makes mistakes... Don't get too depressed, okay? Just accept your punishment and reflect carefully. After countless failures and countless disciplining... It's fine so long as you learn gradually."

"U-Umm... I didn't get disciplined yet, so it's unavoidable after all?"

"I cannot say for sure. Half of the responsibility lies with Busujima-sensei, in this case... There will be problem so long as the lost panties do not include bear print panties."

"Eh? Are those your panties, Syamaya-senpai?"

"Absolutely not! How could I possibly wear panties of such poor taste."

"—Who are you calling poor in taste, Syamaya?"

Instantly, a low lolita voice descended from behind Syamaya's back.

Syamaya suddenly froze in the middle of moving yogurt elegantly.

Face going pale, she timidly turned back...

"Oh... K-Kurumiya-sama!? N-No... It's not like that. It's not like that!"

"Hoh? If not that, then what? I'd like to question you properly, come here!"

"Noooooooooooooooo!"

Kurumiya grabbed Syamaya by the back of her collar and dragged her away.

Seeing Syamaya crying "Not like that! Not like that!" hoarsely while receding into the distance, Renko laughed. "Shuko."

"Good job, Maina. I can't believe you acted friendly to get close to her so that she'll lower her guard... Then boom, done her in! Oh my~ What a skillful plan."

"Ehhh!? N-No no no no, it's not like that! I, was just... Auau."

"...Whether or not it was intended, this feels great. Just the fact that she'll be disciplined is good enough."

"D-Don't mind... Syamaya-senpai. But, well..."

--No matter how young she looked, wearing animal print panties as someone in their twenties was definitely in poor taste.

Agreeing mentally, Kyousuke offered Syamaya his sympathies.

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"...Phew. It's finally over."

After breakfast, Kyousuke was looking at his spotlessly cleaned room and organized luggage as he wiped sweat off his brow. Then taking out the guidebook from his backpack, he sat down on the bed.

The itinerary's "Luggage Packing, Cleaning" instantly made his eyebrows move together.

On just the second day of this three-day-two-night open-jail school, seeing as he still needed to use the same room for today and tomorrow, the words "cleaner than when you arrived" felt weird more or less.

Wouldn't a thorough cleaning like just now normally be conducted on the day of leaving the facility--?

Just as Kyousuke was flipping through the booklet randomly and pondering this kind of question...

"...Kyousuke?"

A cautious voice. Looking up, he gazed towards the entrance where the sound was coming from.

A beauty with rust-red hair was standing outside the bars with her head lowered.

"Yo, Eiri. What's up? Are you free because you've finished cleaning?"

"Hmm. Well... I guess? Looks like you're almost done too."

It felt like Eiri was forcing herself to endure something and did not look too well in the face. After answering, she opened the door.

"Why are you so flustered?"

"Mind your own business."

Eiri rapidly walked up to the puzzled Kyousuke.

"..."

--Whoosh. She sat down next to Kyousuke on the edge of the bed.

"..."

"..."

"U-Umm... Eiri-san?"

"What?"

"Nothing, really... How should I say this? Umm..."

--So near. Too near. Near enough that their shoulders were almost about to touch.

Sitting beside him, Eiri was looking down without saying a word, tapping her heel on the floor.

Rather than awkward, it felt more like a situation where all he could do was wait for her to speak up.

Hence, Kyousuke quietly waited for her to speak.

Not long after, Eiri inhaled as though making a decision.

"...Sorry, Kyousuke."

A feeble voice, murmuring quickly. Kyousuke looked at Eiri in surprise.

From the side of her face, he could see her staring harshly at the floor, looking as though she might cry any moment.

"Sorry, umm... what's that about? I don't recall anything you need to apologize for."

"...Nothing much."

"No, even if you say it's nothing much..."

"...Sorry."

"No, even if you say sorry..."

"..."

"..."

"U-Umm... Eiri-san?"

Silence descended once more. Kyousuke was in trepidation, not knowing what to do.

Then Eiri turned her face away.

"I'm sorry for giving you so much bad attitude."

She seemed to be forcing these words out.

Eiri continued to stare at the floor while speaking to the confused Kyousuke:

"Always so prickly every single time... Sorry. Although I keep telling myself to be more gentle, the more I think over things the more lost I feel and end up speaking more and more harshly... Then feeling angry at myself for that, it makes my attitude even harsher--Because it's been like this recently all the time, I'm left with only unpleasant memories. Clearly you're the one facing so much hardship, Kyousuke... But we're not supporting you. Even when this is clearly wrong, we keep losing our temper over little things and increase your burden unnecessarily... I am so sorry!"

"Eiri..."

This listless voice was not like her usual self.

Hearing all this, Kyousuke felt an emotion rise in his heart, difficult to describe.

It resembled happiness, shyness and anger at the same time--

While Eiri bit her lip and clutched the side of the bed, Kyousuke said:

"...I'm the one who should apologize. I totally failed to notice that you were thinking about these things... If you're talking about unnecessary burdens, then that's me for sure. In terms of hardship, it must be the same for you, Eiri... Wanting to support you, it's the same for me."

"Kyousuke..."

Eiri looked up from the floor and gazed at Kyousuke.

In turn, Kyousuke gazed into those wavering eyes of rust red.

"Besides, I think it's okay even if you don't think about 'I must be more gentle' or stuff like that. Overcompensating could end up making things worse. I think you just need to stay natural and don't push yourself."

"..."

Then for some reason, Eiri fell into displeased silence and bit her lip hard.

She looked down once again. All Kyousuke could hear was a murmur of "...But."

"Kyousuke, umm.. You prefer the gentle type like that Syamaya-senpai, right?"

--Come again?

Kyousuke spontaneously stared intently at the side of Eiri's face.

Still tapping the floor repeatedly with her heel, Eiri was blushing slightly in the face.

"..Huh? I-If you're asking that.. In other words--"

"Don't get the wrong idea."

While Kyousuke was panicking on his own after imagining various things, Eiri gazed at him with half-open eyes.

"...Huff." Exhaling, she leaned her face against a hand, this time even turning her body towards him.

"Hey Kyousuke. You... The instant you fall in love with Renko, you'll get killed by her, right?"

"Hmm? Yeah... That's right. Apparently, I'll be killed if our feelings are mutual."

"...Do you really understand this issue?"

Eiri's expression went stiff while her voice sounded dogmatic.

"If it's just Renko, so be it, but for you to get all bewitched by an upperclassman you just met... You're such a skirt-chaser that it's unbelievable. Seeing you like this worries me. At this rate, I can't help but wonder if you'll easily fall for Renko, if you'll easily get killed... So--"

Eiri suddenly toppled over, resting her head against Kyousuke's shoulder.

Through the tightly fastened uniform, Kyousuke could feel the soft sensations of a slender body. From the few strands of hair scattered on the tip of his nose came the scent of shampoo. Resting on her lap, Eiri's fist clenched.

"So, I just have to do this, right? In order to save you from the temptations of Renko and all the other dangerous girls, no helping, I just have to do this, right?"

"..."

Frozen and unable to respond, Kyousuke listened as Eiri continued.

Unable to calm down, her eyes wandered and she asked:

"Hey... What do you want? You, haven't you accepted all kinds of things that Renko did? Umm... If it's just a little bit, I can also do all kinds of things for you, okay?"

"All kinds of things... L-Like what?"

"S-Stuff like that, of course I don't know! I'm asking because I don't know!"

Eiri snarled angrily, her face going more and more red.

Then she bowed her head and looked down at her feet.

After a brief silence, Eiri murmured:

"For example, umm... a lap pillow, maybe?"

"----"

Time stopped. Kyousuke subconsciously looked at Eiri's lap.

Extending out from under the gray skirt were pale white legs. Although she was wearing thigh-highs for the winter uniform, dressed for summer now, she currently had short socks. Those smooth and delicate thighs were very dazzling. Kyousuke was not sure if it was his imagination, but compared to the winter uniform, her skirt seemed even shorter--

"...Umm, could you not stare at me intently like that?"

"Oh, sorry..."

Kyousuke frantically turned his gaze away. "...Ahem." Eiri coughed dryly.

"...So? How about it, Kyousuke? ...Want a try? Or you'd rather not?"

"What?"

"A lap pillow!"

"O-Oh..."

Eiri yelled, blushing to her ears. Kyousuke was a bit afraid.

With the term "lap pillow" slipping out of her mouth, she seemed quite shy.

Eiri clicked her tongue with a displeased face and leaned back with her hands against the bed behind her.

"...Hmm. Hey, want to try lying down?"

She extended her knees--or rather, her thighs--towwards him.

A lap pillow seemed preordained by this point.

Gulping, Kyousuke went "...O-Okay" and nodded.

It was obvious for Eiri who was providing the lap pillow, but even Kyousuke, the one enjoying it, also felt embarrassed.

Straightening their backs, they both took a deep breath.

Towards the legs that seemed to be tossed towards him, Kyousuke carefully lay down.

"..."

"..."

Neither Kyousuke nor Eiri had anything to say to each other.

Soon after, just as Kyousuke's right cheek was about to touch Eiri's tender skin--

"...You two, what are you doing?"

On the other side of the bars, a pair of emerald eyes glared harshly and made eye contact.

" "...!?" "

Instantly, Kyousuke and Eiri separated in a flash.

Sitting back to back, they both shouted "N-Nothing!" simultaneously.

Showing a disdainful look, Syamaya made no response.

Entering the room without saying a word, she looked down at Kyousuke and Eiri.

"--What were you about to do just now?"

She asked in a lower voice than previously.

Kyousuke felt his heart ringing like an alarm clock while energy was drained from his entire body.

Feeling Syamaya's gaze on his face, he was unable to make eye contact due to excessive fear.

"...S-Syamaya-senpai? Umm, there's a very deep reason for this--"

"What were you planning to do just now?"

"Huh. N-No... Like I said, umm--"

"I am asking you, what exactly were you planning to do just now?"

Kyousuke was unable to compose sentences properly due to anxiety. Syamaya directed her questioning to him repeatedly.

Repeating the same question in a flat voice again and again, she drew her face near.

Just as Kyousuke was feeling very awkward, about to be crushed by her pressure...

"...Nothing. We were doing nothing. You're the one who's imagining indecent things on your own, right? Closet pervert Senpai."

Eiri accused coldly.

Syamaya turned towards Eiri, her eyes fill with anger.

"Wha... W-Who is the close pervert Senpai!?"

"Not close but closet. Please pay attention to the issue of obesity, okay?"

"Oh, ara ara... Ufufu. Oh my oh my, excuse me please! I was only feeling a little sad because of the excessive paucity of your chest. Sorry, flat pervert junior? Ufufufu."

"Don't worry, fatty Senpai. I just lack useless fat, that's all."

Sparks flew as Syamaya and Eiri smiled at each other in a direct confrontation.

Although not as exaggerated as Renko, Syamaya slowly crossed her arms to emphasize her voluptuous bust. Eiri leaned forward, placing her hand at her waist, making a display of her slender figure.

A fight could break out any time. The two girls glared intently at each other, almost about to start slaughtering each other.

Despite feeling very afraid inside, Kyousuke still racked his brain for a solution to this situation.

"Oh, hey, you two... Don't fight, okay? Big busts and flat chest each have their distinctive qualities, ABCDEFG are all good in their own ways! Let's just leave it at that, okay? Stop arguing, okay? Love & Peace & Oppai! ...Okay? Understand?"

" "FUCK OFF." "

"Eh."

Syamaya and Eiri both showed middle fingers to Kyousuke for his interruption.

Seeing two beauties glare at him in scorn, Kyousuke was stunned, suffering a huge blow.

"...So back to the question? What were you two planning to do just now?"

"We already said we were doing nothing. Are you that stupid?"

--Hence, another verbal spat began.

The chasm between busty Syamaya and the flat-chested Eiri seemed to be even deeper than Renko's valley.

"H-How could you act this way... I am your senior after all, you know? Please pay a little attention to your choice of words! Also, denials are useless. I saw clearly just now! You seem quite hung up on the fact that Kamiya-san's preferred type is a gentle lady like me, thus intending to use that poor body to flirt and engage in intimate contact... The scene of you trying to enslave Kamiya-san's heart, I saw it clearly! That was already a classic tsundere act, through and through."

"Huh!? W-When did you start watching!?"

"Ufufu, when did I start, I wonder?"

"Answer me!"

"You're the one who should answer quickly. After the lap pillow, what else were you intending?"

"Eh? ...A-After? You're saying after the lap pillow... what else needs to be done...?"

"What else? Isn't it obvious? Such as ●● on the likes of ●●, like the ●●●● ● type of ●●●. Then after that.. Using ●●, let ● enter ●● etc etc--"

"Kurumiya-sensei, look at this person."

"Eeek!? No, no! I didn't do anything of that sort! Honest to God! I am pure... I was framed!"

"...I didn't do anything. You're the one who blurted it out on your own."

After Syamaya looked back in a panic to confirm that Kurumiya was not actually present, she glared resentfully at Eiri who was smiling triumphantly.

"So, what are you going to do, Syamaya-senpai? Depending on your reply, I'm totally fine with telling our revered Kurumiya-sensei every indecent word you uttered just now without fail."

"……~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~!?"

Under Eiri's threat, Syamaya bit her lip hard.

She also released her clenched fist.

Exhaling, she ran a hand through her voluminous hair.

"Hoo... N-No helping it. The two of you simply wanted to play a game of lap pillow but did not even carry it out to fruition. This time, I shall turn a blind eye. But listen carefully, okay? I am not submitting your threat. It is simply my heart of tender love that has forgiven you for your abortive act of lust. Do well to remember that."

"...Fine fine fine."

Eiri shrugged. After throwing a sharp glance, Syamaya turned her heels and got ready to leave.

"The same goes for you, Kamiya-san. Listen carefully. Only I am so understanding. Had it been some other member of the Discipline Committee, you would have been taken away immediately... No complaints allowed even if you end up getting disciplined."

Having retreated to and was crouching in a corner of the room after getting scolded harshly by the two girls, Kyousuke looked up upon hearing Syamaya and frowned.

"Other members of the Discipline Committee? ...Disciplined?"

"Indeed. Unlike ordinary students like you, we members of the Discipline Committee are given the privilege of carrying deadly weapons. Depending on circumstances, we even have the authority to discipline ordinary students on the spot just like teachers."

"Wha..."

Syamaya responded to Kyousuke's shock with a smile.

A smile of tender affection that comforted the viewer.

"But please rest assured. I absolutely forbid that kind of thing from happening. This is the only thing I can promise, even if it means wagering the brassiere I'm currently wearing. It's my favorite one, by the way."

"...Really?"

"Certainly. Or perhaps, together with my shirt--"

"No, that's not what I'm referring to..."

Syamaya smiled "Ufufu" at the exhausted Kyousuke.

"Just kidding. But 'no disciplining' is really true. Because I am a genuine pacifist... I just want to be friends with you. It's not everyday that I get to gain precious juniors, so let's all get along nicely from now on?"

Leaving these words behind with a smile, Syamaya left the room.

As her footsteps grew faint and her presence disappeared completely, Kyousuke finally breathed a sigh of relief.

"That was so close... I'm so glad we didn't get condemned. Hey, Eiri."

He thought he was dead meat already when caught playing lap pillow, but Syamaya turned out surprisingly to be no villain. At least compared to those teachers like Kurumiya and the other Discipline Committee members, she was much better.

"...Hmph. She's so easy to provoke, I've already figured out how to push her buttons already. Perhaps it's a bit surprising, I wonder if she was placed as the Discipline Committee Chair just for appearance's sake?"

As for getting along nicely, no thanks--Throwing these words down, Eiri started to adjust her ponytail.

As one might expect, busty girls and flat chests were irreconcilable enemies.

This girl also had bad relations with Renko...

"...Hey Kyousuke, do you really want to die that much?"

"You read my mind!?"

"You're staring straight at my chest so intently, of course I know what you're thinking, you boob worshiper! I knew it, I just can't treat you nicely after all... Can't stand this, Kyousuke, you're such an idiot!"

Her ponytail swinging madly, Eiri rushed out of the room.

"Aww man, she's sulking now. But to be honest, it's better this way..."

Kyousuke felt inexplicably panicked when faced with a non-confrontational Eiri.

A little lonely yet a little relieved, with this strange feeling, Kyousuke fixed up his luggage again and left the room. Walking along the corridor, he recalled today's itinerary.

It was currently just after ten in the morning. Next on the schedule was "Outdoor Cooking."

As the second day's major event, the cliche of cooking curry outdoors was definitely not going to be omitted.

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The outdoor cooking was taking place within the premises at the Rice Cooking Site.

Under a roof consisting of a high windows stacked from concrete blocks mixed with a stainless steel kitchen setup, Kyousuke and other first-years were patiently focused on outdoor cooking.

"Oh damn it.... It's totally not lighting up, I don't know if I'll make it in time..."

"Awawa. Hang in there, Kyousuke-kun! You'll surely succeed!"

Maina was cheering for Kyousuke as hard as she could. Using friction to produce fire, in other words, the most primitive method, Kyousuke was rubbing sticks to start a fire. With neither matches nor a lighter, newspapers were the only other things provided.

As part of the "hearth group" responsible for starting the fire, Kyousuke and Maina were only allowed to use these provisions.

Also, their teammate Mohican had somehow gotten his hands on a flamethrower from somewhere.

"Hyaha, burn!!" Proudly preparing to light things on fire, he ended up...

"Why don't you fucking burn on your own!?" Kurumiya snatched the flamethrower away and incinerated him. Mohican was now being transported away on a stretcher.

Not wanting to be set on fire, Kyousuke began to seriously rub sticks together to make fire, but...

"Say... Isn't this not working? There's no effect at all."

While wiping sweat away with the towel hanging on his neck, he grumbled.

Working at the same rice cooking site, the other people in charge of hearths for their teams were also struggling to make fires. "Sob, my arms can't carry on..." "I'm quite confident with arson, but this..." "Why don't we just use the real whatever?" All sorts of weak cries. Then among them...

"The flames of my wrath, let them
BUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUURN!!!"

One student was rubbing sticks with extraordinary speed.

A girl with darker complexion and a brown paper bag over her head--Bob. Using her giant palms, she was skillfully causing the wooden stick to rotate at high speed on the wooden board. As Kyousuke watched, it began to smoke and then produce a small orange flame.

"...!? Do it now, Renko!!"

"Yes, leave it to me! Foosh... Foosh...!"

Renko swiftly added newspaper and began to blow.

Nevertheless, perhaps because of the gas mask, she did not succeed in delivering oxygen at all.

Just as Bob and Renko's efforts petered out and the fire gradually died down...

" "You can count on us, GMK!" "

Two nearby boys who were in charge of hearth responsibilities threw down their tools and arrived on scene.

Bringing their faces next to Renko's, they began to blow. " "Huff! Huff" "

"Y-You guys...!"

Thus the fire received oxygen and grew in vigor...

" " " "It's lit!" " " "

In front of the burning flames, the quartet roared vigorously.

The dull cooking site was now filled with smiling faces, applause and cheering.

Bob stuffed a towel up the bottom of the paper bag to wipe her sweat and yelled "With this, my female power has leveled up!" while making a peace sign next to her eye. Come on, this kind of situation is male power no matter how you look at it...

On the other hand, the two classmates high-fiving Renko began to talk excitedly:

"GMK and Sack Bob are really amazing... You're our hope!"

"I'm so honored to help out you two! Shake hands with me, please!"

"Foosh. Yeah, we're the ones who should say thanks. We'd feel really helpless if it weren't for your help. Did you become our fans after watching our debut

performance last night as FUCKIN' PARK? Please keep cheering for us in the future. Foosh."

" "...Yeah!" "

Holding their hands as though cherishing their handshakes with Renko, the boys returned to their original teams.

Watching all this happen, Kyousuke leaked an exclamation from his mouth.

"Wow... They're super popular now."

After the performance at the campfire party, SATSUJINRAP seems to have gathered quite a favorable following. The members of Class B Team 4 were currently enjoying zealous support from their classmates.

The nonconformist behavior that caused them to be ostracized in the past was now apparently reinterpreted as part of their unique and independent style.

Although their unconcern for matters of appearance made them seem unapproachable, after speaking with them, people would find them to be an upfront bunch.

"Yahoo! How are things going, you two?"

Then the GMK in question--Renko--came over to chat.

Kyousuke's Class A Team 4 were neighbors in workspace with Renko's Class B Team 4.

"Just as you can see, totally no good here... There's no signs of lighting up at all."

"Auau. At this rate, noon is going to pass and we'll... go hungry."

"Is that so?" Seeing Kyousuke and Maina depressed, Renko nodded and said:

"Then we'll share our fire with you."

" "Eh?" "

"What's so surprising? Isn't that only natural? It's not like we lose anything... If anyone else wants, please feel free to borrow fire from our hearth!"

Renko said nonchalantly and swept her gaze across the entire cooking site. Everyone who was having trouble lighting a fire looked up with widened eyes at Renko. Instantly...

" " "GMK!!!!!!!!!" " "

A thunderous roar of touched emotions. Throwing down their fire-making tools, the students rushed over to Renko.

" " "GMK! GMK!" " " They lifted Renko up.

In just a split second after leaving Kyousuke's view, Renko was tossed in the air again and again with cheers from all the students. Watching this lively scene from a sideways gaze...

"...Tsk. What GMK, how ridiculous."

The disdainful Shinji did not care to borrow fire.

It was conceivable that Shinji was still holding a grudge against Renko's group after suffering ample abuse during the Orienteering of the Seven Atonements. Naturally, their popularity did not make him happy at all. Shinji's teammates, Usami and the bimbo, were also glaring at the tossed Renko with resentment on their faces. Only dreadlocks Oonogi looked like he wanted to join in, conflicted and uncomfortable...

"...Okay. With this, the first problem of the hearth is solved."

Standing before the crackling flames, Kyousuke breathed a sigh of relief and turned his gaze to the counter.

In front of the counter which was attached to the hearth, students in uniform were dressed in aprons. Holding kitchen knives, they were at a loss on how to proceed.

As the "cooking group", they were facing the chopping board where a weird and ominous fish was lying with psychedelic spots on its round and bloated body. It was still twitching slightly.

'...Okay. What everyone has obtained is the Busujima-raised puffer fish. A white-fleshed fish with a light and refreshing flavor~ Oh, despite being a type of puffer, it doesn't carry tetrodotoxin, the neurotoxin that the puffer is known for, so go ahead and eat it without worry. If you make any errors in handling, the worst that could happen is intense dizziness, headaches, stomachaches and nausea! Since it's not every day that you get to make curry with everyone, please cook with meticulous care if you don't want to get flipped inside out, for both the top and bottom ends of your body. The toxic parts of the fish are the outer skin, the innards and the blood. If you're unlucky, a certain part of the body will also... Oh, no, nothing in particular. By the way, there is no part which cannot be eaten. If you dare throw anything away, I will give you a direct intravenous injection of poison, got that? That's all I have to say, so the next step is up to your skills.'

—That was how it was presented. As a side note, the one responsible for cooking in Kyousuke's team was...

"...Yawn."

The unmotivated and yawning Eiri.

Mohican was absent from the start due to Kurumiya's disciplining. Kyousuke had never touched a kitchen knife due to dumping all household chores on his sister Ayaka. Naturally, due to Maina's traits, 'nuff said. In other words, this was the result from a process of elimination.

"...Just cut this thing up, right?"

Although the kerchief and the apron looked great on her, the level of Eiri's cooking skills was a complete unknown.

Before the outdoor cooking session, Kyousuke had asked her "Can you cook?" Eiri had glared back at him with a look that seemed to say "Of course I can, don't underestimate me, okay?" which was why Kyousuke felt it should be okay.

"..."

Eiri twirled the thick bladed, sharp-tipped kitchen knife on her hand while staring with her sleepy eyes down at the twitching puffer on the chopping board. Murderous intent suddenly gathered in her eyes.

The spinning blade stopped. Eiri raised the kitchen knife to the sky and swung down.

"Die!!!"

—Chop!

Swung down with speed faster than the naked eye could follow, the deadly weapon severed the puffer's head and sent it flying.

"Nooooooooooooooooo!"

Kyousuke could not help but scream. Descending straight down like a guillotine, the blade had severed the puffer's head completely, embedding itself deeply into the chopping board. The flying head traced out a bright red trajectory in the air.

"...Eh? Wahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

Plop, the head rolled over to Michirou who was working on the neighboring countertop.

Ignoring Michirou who was leaning back and screaming, Eiri slightly backed away from the trembling headless corpse of the puffer where blood was spewing from the severed surface.

"U-Uwah... What is that? It's super gory."

" " "----" " "

Staring at this scene, Kyousuke and Maina truly backed away.

...Eh, what the fuck? Eiri-san, don't you know how to cook? That's way too tragic.

"W-Well... This sure looks disgusting, I'd better cut it up quickly."

Pulling out the kitchen knife that was stabbed into the chopping board like an erected tombstone, Eiri readied a stance again. The blade shone, reflecting sunlight. Eiri raised the knife up high and swung down with all her strength.

"...This ends here."

Suddenly, a hand interfered and grabbed her, stopping the swing.

--Michirou. Wearing the kerchief wrapped bandanna-style, dressed in an apron, Michirou had grabbed Eiri's wrist from behind. Eiri glared at him with annoyance.

"...Hey, could you stop getting in the way of my cooking?"

"Cooking? To think you... call this cooking? --Ha! Utterly ludicrous. What you're doing here is not cooking at all but simply slaughtering. Let one such as I tell you... The meaning of true cooking, watch!"

As soon as he finished, Michirou snatched the kitchen knife from her.

"W-What are you doing--Kyah!?"

"...Move aside." Michirou shoved Eiri away just as she was about to protest, then stood before the chopping board.

Michirou made a pose with the kitchen knife like thrusting a sword, then towards the puffer's corpse, he offered...

--A moment's silence.

"O puffer... Thou art the soul whose life was terminated at the hands of a sadistic murderer, let me offer you an eulogy. In the embrace of a requiem's melody, rest in peace... Come, dance with me, Azrael! Secret technique: Bring me the Horizon, first movement--Pray for Plagues!"

After the long introduction speech, Michirou suddenly opened his eyes and swung the kitchen knife.

Inserting the knife to dig out the innards, he then deftly removed the bones and skinned the fish.

Humming a song which Kyousuke did not know if it was a requiem or not, Michirou handled the fish with superb skill.

"N-No way... How does he--"

"Michirou-kun's family runs a restaurant, so his cooking skills are top-notch..."

Chihiro squatted down in front of the surprised Eiri who had fallen on the ground, interrupting with an explanation. Her blood-red eyes examined Eiri's body.

"W-What are you doing?"

"......Looks quite tasty. Hey, can I eat you?"

"Huh!? Of course not!"

"...I don't mean in a sexual sense."

"I know! No matter what sense, no means no!"

Chihiro sucked her finger while watching Eiri protest with a red face, then returned to her own counter.

Having finished handling the puffer, Michirou followed Chihiro and left as well, leaving behind words of "I have held a memorial for its soul... I leave the rest to thee."

Remaining on the chopping board was puffer flesh, beautifully handled and washed clean.

"...Hmph. I-I'm not going to thank you. It's just a fish or two, I can do it too. I really can! ...Probably."

Standing before the chopping board once again, Eiri scoffed and refused to admit defeat.

Placing the puffer flesh on a plate, she then started to handle the vegetables. But possibly because she still had no idea what to do, after a duration of hesitation, she began to imitate Michirou's posture--

"O-Okay... Let's head over to the hearth, Maina."

"Awawa. S-Sure... Will we be able to eat properly? ...Lunch."

Kyousuke and Maina took there gaze off the countertop and returned to their stations.

--Chop! Chop chop chop chop chop chop, chop!

While the kitchen knife descended, they could hear Michirou from over the counter:

"The potato, the potato!!!? It's turned into a completely different entity!"

He screamed but gave up, no longer able to bear the tragic sight anymore.

Thirty minutes after the outdoor cooking started...

The air of resignation had already risen amidst Kyousuke and his team while they continued to work.

At least make the rice slightly more palatable... Doing that would at last avoid the worst outcome of the "hungry" Bad End. As long as it was edible, kneading the rice into salt-flavored rice balls would be fine.

Motivating his heart of resignation, Kyousuke offered the hearth his full effort.

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Dominated by an atmosphere of despair was Kyousuke's Class A Team 4.

Because a few minutes later, an unexpected guest entered the stage.

"Good day, everyone. How progresses your curry making?"

While Kyousuke was washing rice grains at the sink, Syamaya appeared in an apron with a kerchief on her head.

Instantly, it was as though a beautiful flower had bloomed in the cooking site that was filled with sweat and smoke. In the middle of their tasks, the students all

turned their heads at once. "Syamaya-senpai!" "It's Syamaya-senpai!" "So pretty..." "Beautiful!" "Too dazzling to view directly!" All sorts of comments, boys and girls, their shrill voices in cacophony.

Putting aside what Kyousuke and his friends thought of her, Syamaya was the idolized senior student in the eyes of ordinary students.

Given such a graceful appearance and behavior, it was no wonder that anyone would be fascinated by her.

"My humble apologies for disturbing you in your busy work. I am here to assist teams that are lacking manpower. Please don't mind me and continue with your curry making, okay? Very well, where may Kamiya-san and his delightful little companions be...?"

"Ehhhhhhhhh!"

--Slip, whoosh~... Slice!

Just as Syamaya was looking around, a flying object brushed past the side of her face.

"...What?" Just Syamaya froze entirely, on her face... a red trail appeared.

Trembling, Syamaya placed her hand on the left cheek where the flying object had brushed past.

"------"

Her fingertips were dyed red. This revelation wiped the smile off Syamaya's face.

Syamaya turned her bleeding face to see a hatchet embedded in the ground behind her.

"...What is this, how did it happen?"

At the silenced cooking site, Syamaya's low voice was heard.

"Oh, umm, well... My.... my hand slipped, so..."

Frozen with her two empty hands still in a swinging pose, Maina was staring blankly in front of the firewood.

The instant she made eye contact with Syamaya, she went "Eek!?" in fright and huddled herself, starting to tremble.

"...Your hand slipped? You are saying your hand slipped? You are saying that while chopping wood, the hatchet slipped and flew away... Cutting my face purely by chance--Is that what you mean?"

"Hahee!? Ah... A-Ahhhhhh..."

Faced with Syamaya approaching with a completely emotionless voice, Maina fell on her ass.

Her frightened look felt pitiful with her mouth opening and closing.

"Please do not remain silent. Answer my question, Igarashi-san. Did you throw this hatchet with the intention of killing me? Or because it was an accident, the hatchet simply flew at me by chance? Was it deliberate or unintentional? Please answer me, hurry, please answer me. Otherwise, I shall--"

"It's by chance, by chance! This kinda thing, of course it's an accident!"

Kyousuke stepped between Syamaya and Maina and insisted.

"...Ah" leaked from Maina while Syamaya looked at Kyousuke silently.

With a layer of darkness over her emerald eyes, she said:

"...By chance? Accident? Kamiya-san, on what basis do you make these claims? Please do not interrupt pointlessly, or else--"

"Awawawa... S-S-S-S-So, so shorry! It's an accident! It happened by chance! N-Not on porpoise... Not on purpose, not at all!!!"

Maina shouted as though crying, interrupting Syamaya mid-sentence.

She charged in between Kyousuke and Syamaya, bowing her head apologetically, almost hitting Syamaya with her forehead.

"I am very very clumsy... Because I keep making lots of trouble for everyone, umm... Just now I was preparing to chop firewood, when I swung down, it ended up... Th-The hatchet went flying... Then Syamaya-senpai happened to be there... Awawa. So, I didn't do it on purpose! I'm so sorry for hurting you. Also, on the face, even... I am truly, so very very sorry!"

"--------"

After looking down at Maina huddled in a ball on the ground, Syamaya closed her eyes.

In order to calm herself, she took a deep breath.

".....Hoo. I understand. If that is the the case, then it can't be helped."

A calm smile bloomed. Inside those emerald eyes, clear light shone once again.

She knelt down and caressed the head of Maina who was looking up in puzzlement.

"I am the one who should apologize to you. It is because I have not seen my own blood for so long... It confused me. Sorry. As for the injury, please do not worry. It's very shallow and won't leave a scar."

"Ch-Chamaya-chenpai..."

Faced with Syamaya's smile, Maina's face crumpled. Just as she was about to cry, she handed her pink handkerchief towards Syamaya as though suddenly remembering.

"Umm... I-If it's okay with you, p-please use this! The wound on your face..."

"Ara ara, ufufu. Thank you very much. You really are a gentle girl."

Receiving the handkerchief from Maina's hand, Syamaya smiled radiantly.

...It looked like things were resolved with a happy ending.

After the tense situation ended, Syamaya bowed her head to greet the utterly drained Kyousuke.

"It goes the same for Kamiya-san, I apologize for my unseemliness just now. I am very grateful that you stepped between Igarashi-san and me. Thank you for your help."

"Uh... Oh, it's nothing. Please don't mind. I don't mind at all."

"Ufufu. I see. Despite being a murderer of twelve, you turn out to be very kind, aren't you, Kamiya-san? My interest in you is growing ever more intense..."

"Eh?"

"......Mu."

Baffling Kyousuke, Eiri frowned. Syamaya clapped her hands and said:

"--Okay. I am actually here to assist your team! For some reason, one of your teammates was apparently disciplined by Kurumiya-sama when the outdoor cooking session first started... Something like Mohican? I have seen him getting sent to the infirmary multiple times, is he okay?"

"Oh... Don't worry about Mohican. I think that guy'll be fine, at least physically. This happens all the time."

"...All the time? Well, no matter. In any case, I was sent here on Kurumiya-sama's orders to assist you team given your lack of numbers..."

Adjusting her kerchief and retying her apron string, Syamaya's vigor was intimidating.

Her eyes shining radiantly, she made a fist showing full motivation.

"I, Syamaya Saki... humbly offer my absolutely devoted efforts to help you all. Let us cooperate to make delicious curry! Our goal is three stars! Despite how I may look, I am actually quite confident in cooking. Ufufu, sorry for embarrassing

myself earlier, so let me redeem my honor from this point onwards! Whether beef, chicken, fish or human flesh... You shall witness with your very own eyes my superb skills that'll turn them into masterpieces!"

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"...What... is this?"

Breathing irregularly, walking up to the countertop, Syamaya's enthusiasm was chilled all of a sudden after witnessing the tragic scenery before her eyes. With gauze applied on her cheek, her face began to twitch.

"E-Even if you ask... It's just vegetables."

"Is that so? So these are vegetables... Of course I know that! What I'm asking about is how did you put them into such a tragic state!"

--Slam! Syamaya slapped her hand onto the counter and glared at Eiri.

"...W-Who knows." Arms crossed, face turned away, Eiri answered in a uncharacteristically weak voice. In front of her, what completely buried the countertop was...

"S-So tragic... It's like the scene of a massacre."

Potatoes, carrots, onions--All had suffered the same fate.

Neither skinned nor washed, these corpses had been dismembered, shredded to an unbelievable degree.

The chopping board was criss-crossed by countless deep cuts from the kitchen knife. Debris sent flying by the impacts were scattered haphazardly all over the counter and the floor.

This was a genocidal massacre leaving corpses everywhere. And the sadistic mass murderer responsible for the bloodbath was currently biting her lip.

"W-What massacre... It's nowhere as bad as you're making it out to be."

Probably suffering a huge blow, the murderer's eyes were welling up with tears.

"S-Sorry. Calling it a massacre would be too much. This isn't a massacre, it's... slaughter?"

"What's the difference!? Kyousuke, you're such a jerk! Do you want to end up like these vegetables!?"

"...Sorry."

Reluctant to turn into a shredded corpse, Kyousuke instantly bowed his head and apologized.

Eiri's hand was raised angrily with the kitchen knife, but the deadly weapon was taken away once more.

"...Confiscated. With this in your hand, there won't be enough ingredients left no matter how much we have. Seriously, incorrigible... You and Kamiya-san should go watch the hearth. On the other hand, we need to appoint someone else in charge of cooking. Could you help me with the cooking, Igarashi-san?"

"Eh!? M-M-M-M-Me, me do cooking!?"

"Huh!? Hold it right there!"

Hearing Syamaya's orders, Maina was dumbstruck while Eiri's voice grew violent.

"I can't believe you're asking Maina to take charge of the cooking, totally ridiculous... Are you alright in the head!?"

"...Mass murderer, what nonsense might you be spewing now?"

Feeling surprised from the bottom of her heart, Syamaya sighed then shrugged.

"S-Shut up!" Eiri yelled with her face all red.

"Umm... Excuse me, Syamaya-senpai, I agree with Eiri. It's really best not to let Maina take charge of the cooking. The results will be deadly."

"...Deadly? How now?"

After hearing Kyousuke, Syamaya cocked her head in puzzlement.

Kyousuke explained while Syamaya blinked repeatedly.

He mentioned the incident when Maina's classmate died on the spot after eating her cooking, how researchers were unable to identify any poison in the food, failing to get to the bottom of the cause...

Soon after, Syamaya finished listening to the explanation.

"Ara ara. Well, well... In that case, it can't be helped."

Smiling wryly while giving up honestly. After a glance at Maina's face--

"--Did you really think I'd say that?"

Making a serious expression, she stared at Kyousuke.

Inside her eyes, the color of skepticism was clearly surfacing.

"Making food that kills people, this sort of thing... Impossible on common sense considerations. What a joke in poor taste. Could you refrain from teasing your seniors too much?"

"Huh? But Maina's classmate died on the spot after eating her cooking--"

"And from whose mouth did you hear this story from?"

"Maina told me herself, but..."

"...Has anyone else mentioned it?"

"No, no one else... I think. Only Maina mentioned that incident."

"Is that so...? In that case, there is no solid proof."

Syamaya asserted and raised her index finger.

"...Listen carefully, okay? You have not seen with your own eyes how Igarashi-san's cooking killed someone. Neither did you hear the story from a teacher. In

spite of that, why can you assert so strongly that she was telling the truth? Or perhaps all of her story was a lie, right?"

" "Wha--" "

Kyousuke and Eiri exclaimed in surprise then clamped their mouths shut.

Maina was staring at Syamaya with a shocked face.

"This sort of thing is nothing unusual in this school. For the sake of attracting classmates' interest, for the sake of bragging about how special one might be... They exaggerate their killing process. Or rather, to hide their true nature, there are those who omit details when recounting about their committed crimes... I have seen many similar cases in the past. Hence, can you belief something a person says about themselves so easily?"

" " "....." " "

Syamaya's expression was very stern while she swept her gaze across Kyousuke's team.

The silence was then broken by someone speaking very apprehensively.

"U-Umm... So that means I'm lying?"

"No, not at all. I am just saying that the possibility exists. Now back to the subject at hand. There are currently two possibilities. One is that 'food cooked by you is capable of killing' while the other is that 'Igarashi-san is lying'. Which possibility is closer to the truth? Ultimately, this cannot be proven except through an actual experiment, wouldn't you agree?"

" " "...!?" " "

Syamaya eloquently posed her question and swept her bangs up.

She was taking a conciliatory policy towards Kyousuke's team while they were reeling back in shock, unable to answer.

"I can understand how you feel, wanting to believe in your friend. But I am more disposed to the latter possibility. It goes without saying that if the special skill of 'killing people using food' can be actualized, I really would like to bear witness to that. Given this rare chance, how about testing it out right here, right now?"

A smile spreading all over her face, she spoke.

"Let us leave the curry cooking to Igarashi-san! I shall be the first to savor the readied dish. Let me be the poison tester. If nothing happens, it means that Igarashi-san is lying. If my body suffers strange symptoms, to the point of death... Then Igarashi-san is really telling the truth. Hear that? Don't you find this very interesting?"

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"...Hey, is this really okay?"

Eiri added firewood to the hearth while asking.

"No, it'll definitely be bad..." Kyousuke scratched his head with a troubled expression.

On the countertop, Maina was apprehensively making curry under Syamaya's watchful gaze.

Also, the vegetables ruined by Eiri's slicing were completely renewed. Having gone through Michirou's handling, the potentially poisonous puffer fish (tested for poison by Michirou himself) was used in the curry.

In this manner, ten minutes after Maina started cooking--

With every action under close scrutiny, Maina seemed very nervous, frequently making blunders while exclaiming "Ah!? Sob sob... S-Sorry!"

Maina dropped the kitchen knife again. Then picking it up and rinsing in the sink, she was frightened by the sudden splash from excessive water pressure and jumped backwards.

—Whoosh! Holding the kitchen knife, Maina's hand flew past Syamaya's neck while Syamaya was monitoring from close range. "S-S-S-S-S-Sorry!" Thrashing randomly about in panic, Maina performed a vicious combo attack. With countless silver flashes, the cooking utensils were made a total mess.

"You... Y-Y-You! I knew it, you're doing this intentionally!"

Dodging the knife completely, Syamaya yelled brusquely while sweat broke out on her forehead.

Starting not too long ago, this soon became a repeating scene. Hence, later...

"Eh!? I-I didn't do it on purpose... No, umm--Eeek!"

"STOP IT, I say!"

Wavering from Syamaya's scolding, Maina blundered repeatedly, totally turning into the usual scene. Watching from the side, this was all too familiar to Kyousuke and Eiri.

At this rate, getting the cooking done without issue would be a miracle.

"So, even though she vetoed the suggestion that ending this would be better... I guess any normal person would've been killed already, right?"

In the end, Syamaya had exercised her Discipline Committee rights to forcibly put into action the ridiculous notion of asking Maina to try cooking.

Once she had steeled her determination to confirm the veracity of the claim, there was nothing Kyousuke and his team could say to dissuade her.

Smiling, she had said: 'If anything happens, I shall take responsibility alone'...

"Foosh. I feel like it's becoming a fun and funny farce."

Standing at the neighboring hearth, completely unbothered by the smoke from the flames, Renko wiped the eyepieces on the gas mask while making conversation with Kyousuke and Eiri who were watching the cooking situation worriedly.

"Maina's cooking eh... Without mixing in anything extra, just by cooking normally, she can make food that kills. to be honest, I'm not completely convinced either. So this is really exciting. If Maina is not lying, then that annoying upperclassman will die... Either way, the result will be delicious."

Renko shook her body in excitement then laughed with "foosh."

It was as though she were entrusting her body to the music coming out of her headphones nonstop--The substitute for killing intent.

Looking at the side of the gas mask-obscured face, Kyousuke was very surprised.

"That's quite usual, Renko. I can't believe you're showing overt dislike for someone."

"Hmm? Is that so...? Basically, wouldn't this be repulsion between like traits?"

"...Like traits? Between you and Syamaya-senpai?"

"Yes, from her body... I can smell something similar to myself. That's--"

Nodding, Renko slowly crossed her arms.

This caused her voluptuous bosom to be lifted up by her arms.

"Her boobs are quite large as well, so it's infuriating."

"...I'm infuriated about that part of yours too."

"That part of mine? Oh, big boobs!"

"...Of course not. It's the way you use laughter deceptively after saying something serious."

"Don't get so hung up, Eiri."

"What the fuck are you talking about, useless boobs? Just go die already."

"I knew it, boobs are what you're angry about..."

"...What did you say?"

"Nothing."

Struck by her gaze that was sharper than the kitchen knife, Kyousuke looked down.

"...Hmph." Eiri looked to the side and changed the subject:

"By the way, how's the actual situation...? Maina's cooking."

"Compared to the potential bulging of Eiri's chest, there are still many possibilities."

"......Hey, Kyousuke? What's your take on the matter?"

"Eh? W-Well... You're still in puberty, Eiri, so there's plenty of room for you to grow? Look, isn't there a saying? Great talent takes time to grow--"

"Like hell anyone's talking about boobs!? I'm taking about Mainas cooking! Maina's cooking!"

"Foosh. Serves you right for ignoring my attempt to play dumb. I think you'll still remain flat-chested no matter how long you wait."

"...Do you want to be thrown into the fire along with the wood? If only your fat will burn away along with everything else."

"Then chop the onion into large chunks--Kyah!? My eyes, it's stinging my eyes!?"

"Eeeeeeeeeeeeeek, I'm about to be killed!!!!!"

"...This outdoor cooking sure is lively, eh? Michirou-kun."

"Alas, verily... Forget not, Chihiro. Mine true appellation be Makiyouin Kuuga."

The cooking grounds was noisy and filled with the chattering of students.

Holding a curry pot in his hand, Michirou came over to the hearth with Chihiro.

Keeping watch on the rice pot, Bob shook her giant body and paper bag, smiling:

"Isn't it nice to get along so well~ I'm so glad I came to this school!"

"Ready, one, two... Move the pot onto the fire--OH NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!"

"I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIIIIIIIIIIIIS!"

In these laughter-filled cooking grounds, the sounds of something breaking and Syamaya screaming could be heard.

In the clear blue sky of this summer day, a giant rain cloud drifted over.

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"I-It's done... It's done!"

Staring at the bubbling pot of curry on the hearth, Syamaya exclaimed with delight.

Right now, she exuding exhaustion and weariness. Although not as bad as getting injured, her honey-colored hair was already disorganized, her clothing in disorder. The shadowy gloom in her eyes even seemed to spread near her cheekbones.

"Huff... S-So dead tired~ I knew it, cooking is tough..."

Equally haggard, Maina collapsed on the floor.

"...I am the one who suffered" said Syamaya's eyes as she cast a gaze of reprimand towards Maina who was sighing and wiping her sweat. Then Syamaya looked at the pot again.

"...Looks very ordinary."

"...An ordinary look."

"...So ordinary."

"Foosh."

As Kyousuke and the rest looked at the pot, everyone made the same kind of comment.

--Ordinary. Bite-sized chunks of potato, carrot and onion, together with slices of puffer fish were floating in a brown and viscous roux. It looked no different from extremely ordinary curry.

"The vegetables have been skinned cleanly so it does look quite appetizing, doesn't it?"

"That's right. No issues came up during the cooking process. Although there was no lack dangerous situations in another sense... The cooking itself is a hundred times better than that mass murderer's."

"Eh!? Why did you cause such a tragic incident, Eiri? I didn't notice because I was too preoccupied with the hearth... Shuko."

"S-Shut up! My own business is besides the point!"

While everyone watched, Eiri roared angrily with her face all red.

Maina asked awkwardly:

"Umm... Are you sure you're eating it? I-I think it's better that you don't--"

"Of course I am, here I go!"

Syamaya instantly rejected Maina's suggestion and answered firmly.

" " "....." " "

Paying no mind to Kyousuke and the others' nervousness, Syamaya smiled with confident composure.

Calmly, she slowly placed her hand on her chest and said:

"Rest assured, there is no need worry. Please do not look at me with such eyes. From start to finish, every single action... All of it was undertaken under my supervision without taking my eyes off for a single instance, you know? There was neither any chance for poison to be mixed in nor were there any issues in the cooking process. I dare assert that--Nothing will happen at all after I eat this pot of curry!"

Declaring with absolute confidence, Syamaya raised the spoon.

There was not the slightest unease on her dainty face, firm as rock.

"...Well then, I shall start the taste testing, yes?"

Standing in front of the bubbling and simmering pot of curry, Syamaya swept her gaze over everyone's face.

Kyousuke gulped stiffly. Eiri's eyebrows were squeezed together. Renko was laughing "shuko." Maina had closed her eyes tight in resignation, clasping her hands together as though in prayer.

Syamaya nodded and stopped smiling.

Scooping up a spoonful of curry, she blew to cool it then...

"Here I go."

She placed it into her mouth without hesitating at all.

"..."

Syamaya looked up and carefully savored the curry in her palate.

Her brow, frowning at first, slowly relaxed.

Then Syamaya smiled tenderly at the apprehensive Maina who had opened her eyes. Her satisfied face seemed to be saying "See, no problem, right?" Just at the very moment when she was about to swallow the curry...

"...!?"

Syamaya's eyes suddenly rolled over.

Her face suddenly went pale, twitching, sweating profusely.

The spoon fell from Syamaya's hand. Grabbing her throat with both hands, she went:

"Buuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu!?"

The contents of her mouth were spurted out in an exaggerated manner.

With a strong curry smell rising up, Syamaya suddenly collapsed to the ground.

"Ah... Curr... Huff... shouldn't... why... this... no..."

Head down on the ground as though prostrating, Syamaya groaned in pain.

Her body was convulsing slightly while she desperately tried to vomit the remainder of the curry.

"Syamaya-senpai!? Syamaya-senpai!!!"

"Everyone leave! Don't breathe in the poison mist!"

Figuring out what had just happened before their eyes, Renko stopped Kyousuke and the others who were planning to rush over to Syamaya, using everything she could to keep them away from Syamaya where a yellow mist of curry was hanging in her surroundings.

"Impos... sible... Impos... si... ble... T-This... taste... Blargh—"

Left to suffer alone in the poison mist, Syamaya was breaking out in sweat and tears.

Probably because of difficulty breathing, Syamaya looked at Kyousuke with pleading eyes.

"...!? Syamaya-senpai--"

"I'll go."

Interrupting Kyousuke who was about to rush forward, Renko charged into the poison mist.

Equipped with a gas mask, Renko reached Syamaya's side, completely ignoring the curry's harmful effects.

Syamaya was trembling all over, her eyes gazing weakly. Picking Syamaya in her arms, Renko escaped the mist.

"Senpai! Senpai!!!"

Maina rushed over to them.

"H-Hey... Wait, Maina!"

"Idiot! If you get close now--"

Completely ignoring Kyousuke and Eiri's advice to stop, Maina suddenly charged towards Syamaya.

--Crap. Maina was currently in a state of panic, which surely meant...

"Uwahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

"Woah, that was close."

"Kyaff, what!?"

Tripping, Maina flew in the air, dodged by Renko, falling on Syamaya.

"Ahhhhhhhh! S-S-S-S-S-S-S-So shorr--"

"Guehhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!"

In an attempt to get up, Maina stabbed her hand towards Syamaya's abdomen, applying a second hit.

Enduring a combo attack, Syamaya was in utter pain.

Watching this scene from afar, Renko sighed with great relief.

"...Shuko. Looks like she survived. Wonderful wonderful."

"What's so wonderful about that!? If we don't stop Maina soon, Syamaya-senpai really gonna get killed!"

"Awawawawawawa. Sh-sh-sh-sh-shorry!"

"Gah, what!?"

Apologizing and suddenly prostrating in dogeza posture, Maina's head crashed into Syamaya in the form of a headbutt.

Deciding this would be bad if it continued, Kyousuke hastily held down Maina's body.

Hearing the commotion and hurrying over, Busujima swiftly called for the paramedics--

"Impossible, to accept... I absolutely, refuse to accept... Gack."

Things finally came to a conclusion with Syamaya transported away on a stretcher.

As a side note, speaking of the curry that had caused this commotion...

"...Hmm hmm. Truly fascinating. I'll be taking this if you don't mind, okay?"

His interest piqued as the poison expert, Busujima reclaimed the pot.

No one knew how Maina's special "killing curry" was dealt with after that.

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"Excuse me... S-Syamaya-senpai?"

"..."

An hour after Maina's cooking commotion... After the outdoor cooking session, Kyousuke, Renko, Eiri and Maina had immediately gone to visit the infirmary. At a small room in a corner of the Home of Limbo's, there were three beds lined up side by side.

Sleeping sound on the bed closest to the door was Mohican (critical) in a respirator.

Separated by an empty bed, Syamaya was sitting up in the farthest bed, gazing at the forest scenery through the window. Speaking from the side, Kyousuke received no response.

"...I'm so sorry! Umm, whenever I'm just cooking normally, but always ends up like this, also... I'm so very sorry about other things--but, I definitely didn't mean any of it! Honestly, they were accidents--"

"Enough."

"...Eh?"

Sobbing away with her head bowed, apologizing, Maina looked up with her tear-covered face.

Syamaya's voice was very dry. Quietly, she made a long sigh.

Soon after, Syamaya turned her gaze from outside the window to Maina's face.

"I am saying there is no need for you to apologize. I am the one who asked you to cook... I asked you as the Discipline Committee Chair. You were only following my instructions, demonstrating your skills very normally, weren't you? However, I was at a total loss after something like that happened, how unreliable of me. Hence, there is no need for you to apologize. Because you are not at fault... Right?"

--She made gentle smile as usual.

Under her calm gaze, Maina stayed silent.

"However..." Syamaya spoke and lowered her gaze.

"That curry, truly too shocking... The taste was too horrific. It wasn't so bad in the beginning, but it was too late by the time I realized. I've never had several, even dozens of extremely shocking flavors, never encountered before, attacking my taste buds all at the same time--I felt as though my sense of taste was being killed! Had I swallowed instead of spitting it out, surely my digestive organs would have been crushed by those stimulating agents, perhaps even dying from fright. T-Truly a terrifyingly deadly weapon..."

Probably due to recalling the taste of the cooking, Syamaya covered her mouth and went "...Urgh."

Maina listened to Syamaya with a subtle expression. She had also cooked with the intention of doing it "normally" so she was currently at a loss on how to react.

While Maina was frozen on the spot, perplexed, Syamaya stroked her head as though going "there there, good girl."

"In any case, thanks to everyone's care, I am fine. I am truly sorry to have doubted you, Igarashi-san... The suffering I experienced shall serve as warning for self-protection. Please don't let this weigh on your minds."

"Ch-Chamaya-chenpai..."

Touched by Syamaya's gentle words, Maina began to sob again.

Syamaya-senpai is such a great person... Thanks to her, the incident was able to be resolved in peace.

"By the way, how did everyone's lunch go? You couldn't have eaten that 'killing curry', right? If on my account, you were--"

"No, don't worry about it."

Pointing to her own gas mask, Renko spoke proudly:

"Just as you can see, I am wearing a gas mask, so I can't eat anything! Since there was the curry my team made and the steak you specially gave me as a gift, both of which I was unable to enjoy due to the mask in the way... I shared my curry with everyone."

"Ara, is that so? That's wonderful. Ufufu."

Hearing the steak subject brought up, Syamaya's beamed with joy.

"Well... After all, we already cooked rice. From the moment I assigned Eiri to the cooking role, we already prepared ourselves for the worst case of getting by with rice alone. But compared to eating plain rice, having Renko's curry really made it tons better."

"Michirou-kun's cooking is amazing."

"Yeah yeah yeah. My bad, my cooking skills suck... Just you wait."

Glaring at Kyousuke and Maina, Eiri grumbled.

Watching this scene with delight, Syamaya half-closed her emerald eyes.

"You are truly interesting. Although I really would like to continue chatting so happily with everyone here... Regrettably, there is no time left. The open-jail school is on a very tight schedule. Next up is the Walk in the Sea of Trees. Pardon my nagging but please take care not to be late. After a slight break, I shall be returning back to my responsibilities. All sorts of preparations are required... Yes, all sorts. Ufufufufu."

Still using the same tone of voice, Syamaya smiled all along.

Shifting his gaze discreetly away from her face, Kyousuke noticed...

--Finally, he discovered it.

There was a trash can located in the shade under a set of medicine shelves.

Trampled to discoloration, ripped to shreds.

A pink handkerchief was thrown in that trash can.

"...!?"

Kyousuke was taken aback, dumbstruck. His entire body tensed instantly.

Kyousuke instantly checked Syamaya's expression, only to see her tilt her head in puzzlement.

"...Is there something on my face?"

Her eyebrows did not move at all when she asked.

She was like an experienced murderer who knew to hide the murder weapon completely out of sight until the instant prior to committing murder.

Using a gentle voice and a calm attitude to skillfully conceal murderous intent.

"Oh... N-Nothing! Nothing at all. S-Since we've confirmed that you're okay, Syamaya-senpai, th-then... Excuse us, we'd better get going!"

"...Kyousuke? What's wrong, it feels like your face--"

"Eiri, Syamaya-senpai already reminded us, right? Time is tight. Okay, let's hurry."

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As soon as he finished, Kyousuke bolted for the door.

...As though he wanted to get out as quickly as possible, not a second too soon.

"Yeah... That's true, but..."

Eiri murmured in surprise and chased after him.

"Syamaya-senpai, please take care! U-Umm... Thank you very much!" Maina bowed in gratitude then ran after them too. "Then see you later, 'kay?" Renko then followed immediately.

Syamaya slowly waved goodbye to Kyousuke's group who had rushed hastily away from the infirmary.

"I should be the one to say thank you. Thank you for visiting, everyone... Let's look forward to continuing our conversation another time? See you later. Ufufu."

To the very end, only a cheerful smile remained on Syamaya's face.

This expression, persisting without the slightest change since a while ago, was almost like a mask.

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"Are you sure you weren't imagining things?"

Kyousuke, Renko, Eiri and Maina were at a deserted corridor, sufficiently far away.

After listening to Kyousuke's explanation, Eiri questioned in alarm.

"No..." Kyousuke shook his head and said again:

"No mistake about it. Thrown into the trash was definitely Maina's handkerchief. The pink handkerchief Maina gave Syamaya-senpai during the outdoor cooking session... It was totally torn apart--"

"Liar!"

Instantly, Maina cried out.

Her tiny voice was trembling, murmuring weakly:

"This kind of thing, no way... Syamaya-senpai clearly smiled so warmly to me and forgave me, comforting me with such gentle words... You're lying, lying, definitely lying! I won't accept it! You must have been mistaken, Kyousuke-kun--"

"I saw it too."

"...Eh?"

Greatly surprised, Maina turned towards Renko.

Covered by the gas mask, her face was staring at Maina without any visible expression.

"Shredded like a rag, pink fabric was thrown into the trash. Although I can't be sure it's the same one you gave her... At the very least, I definitely saw it."

"H-How can that be... L-Liar... Liar..."

Seeing Maina depressed, Eiri stroked her back.

"Well, whether it's true or not... It's best to take precautions anyway just in case."

"...Yeah. Terrible, that handkerchief was clearly Maina's. I can't believe Syamaya-senpai threw it away like that, truly--"

"Yeah, that it's easily evident that she hold dangerous emotions towards Maina. It would be fine if venting those emotions on a handkerchief is enough, but if she's still frustrated, she... might end up setting a trap for Maina. Next time, it might be Maina or us who'll get shredded into piece, maybe?"

" " "....." " "

A heavy silence descended. Renko took out a deep-red booklet.

It was the open-jail school's guidebook. Renko flipped to the page displaying today and tomorrow's itineraries, opening the booklet so that Kyousuke and the others could see, then stared at the itinerary.

"Scheduled next is 'A Walk in the Sea of Trees' huh. Following either a member of staff or the Discipline Committee who will act as the guide, each team will have a leisurely hike through the Sea of Trees... I do have quite foreboding feeling of danger about who is going to be our guide. The memo section says 'Feel free to commit suicide if that's what you want.' Inside the Sea of Trees, corpse disposal is quite convenient as well. If she wants to set a trap, this is the likely location, right? Or perhaps--"

Renko's pale finger slid over the events on the itinerary.

Looking at the upcoming scheduled events, it seemed like they could predict Syamaya's movements.

From the way she spoke fluently, Kyousuke was once again struck by the fact that Renko was a killer.

Not a murder convict but a killer--A professional in murder.

"Will it be tonight's Heart Attack Courage Test? While teachers and other Discipline Committee members are present, it's hard to imagine her bold enough to take action, so... I believe she'll probably set her eyes on this event when groups are split up to act independently. If I were her, that's what I'd do. --Eiri, what do you think?"

"...Well." Eiri rested her chin on her hand as Renko passed the discussion to her.

Despite her inability to deal a killing blow, like Renko, Eiri was equally skilled in killing people. After thinking deeply for a while, she nodded. Using a fingernail painted bright red, she pointed at the Heart Attack Courage Test.

"...If I were to do it, I'd pick nighttime. For murder, preparation is the most important. There's not much time left before the Walk in the Sea of Trees and besides, that girl is definitely not in a complete state of health. Also if she's not the guide, then it's even more impossible... Conversely, there's sufficient preparation time before the Courage Test event plus people will be moving about in pairs. Although the stage seems to be at the Home of Limbo, the whole area is pitch dark once lights are out. If she knows where all the people in charge of

scaring are hidden, it's not impossible to move about completely elusively without anyone noticing."

"Yeah, there doesn't seem to be as many chances in the third day either. Being overly cautious would also end up making openings to be exploited, so anyway, just these two, right? Foosh."

"Somehow... You two seem so scary."

Talking about the subject of "murder" so seriously, Kyousuke was completely unable to keep up with the pace as an ordinary person. At this very moment, Kyousuke could feel an uncrossable distance between him and these girls. During their usual days spending fun times together, he had carelessly forgotten this in a corner of his memory--

Indeed, there existed a decisive difference between Kyousuke and everyone else.

A vast gulf that could only be filled in by piling up bodies and filling the gaps with blood.

"Foosh. What's the matter, Kyousuke? Putting aside the possibility of being enemies, but we're friends. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth--That's how killers operate! I don't want you or Maina to get stolen as prey by a newbie who hasn't killed more than two digits, okay? Just relax."

"...That's what makes you scary."

Kyousuke could imagine it happening for real, a ferocious smile Renko was making behind the gas mask.

"Don't worry." Eiri tossed her hair as Kyousuke went stiff in the body involuntarily.

"I won't let her succeed... I won't let you or Maina get killed by her."

"Eiri..."

"Foosh. Even though I intend to do Eiri in as well? ...Oh well, whatever. In any case, none of us want to get killed by the 'Murderer Princess' Syamaya. It's the same for

all of us so let's cooperate. Despite not reaching my level, she seems to be quite used to murder too. Despite not reaching Eiri's level, she should be quite skilled in using deadly weapons. In order to stay calm even if we're ambushed, we should start staying extra alert from now on, okay?"

Sweeping her gaze across everyone, Renko warned. Kyousuke and Eiri nodded.

Maina's lips were tightly pursed while she was clenching her fists hard.

"...Yes. I get it. I'm so thankful. So sorry... It's all my fault that it got to this, umm..."

"No, it's not your fault, Maina."

Kyousuke rubbed Maina's head roughly and smiled.

"What Syamaya-senpai said is right. She brought it upon herself, basically. Even if she ended up suffering like that--"

"Kyousuke is taking advantage of the situation to touch girls again. Are you building up too much stress?"

Renko placed her hand on Kyousuke's shoulder, sighing "shuko..."

Someone knocked her on the back of the head.

"You're the one taking advantage of the situation. Could you stop rubbing yourself on other people?"

"...Come join in, Eiri."

"Kyah!? W-What are you doing!?"

Poked in the side ribs by a finger, Eiri twisted her body then bounced away.

Then "oh my oh my, you're so sensitive there, Eiri. Then how about here? Lemme try lemme try~ Foosh." Renko spoke with amusement and continued to poke her.

Seeing the two girls horsing around in this narrow corridor, Maina's face relaxed.

"...I give up on those two. But don't worry, Maina. No matter what happens, they're quite reliable... Also, you have me by your side, Maina. So cheer up--Okay?"

"Ah... Y-Yeah! You're right... I have you and everyone else by my side, Kyousuke-kun. I have to cheer up! Then this time, I must..."

--Become everyone's strength. Fully motivated, she made her decision.

In her flaxen-colored eyes, stern and strong resolve could be seen.

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"U-Umm... Are we circling the same place again and again? I hope it's just my imagination. This path just seems so familiar... Auau."

Maina looked around worriedly, sounding like she was about to cry.

The current time was 15:12. Kyousuke and his team were currently having a walk in the sea of trees.

"No, you're making a mistake... Probably. Y-You must be mistaken... Right?"

Walking next to Maina, Kyousuke also began to looking around under Maina's influence.

The greenery of the trees surrounded 360 degrees, burying everything. Due to the canopy of thick multi-layered foliage, the sky was not visible. The surroundings were quite dark and did not feel like daytime at all.

The stroll in the sea of trees had started almost an hour earlier, but no change in scenery could be seen.

Kyousuke and Maina began to feel ill at ease. Trailing behind them at the end, Eiri seemed utterly bored.

"...It's your imagination. The greenery has grown dense, you know? We must have entered a very deep spot."

Asserting that, she yawned.

Although they clearly had to stay on alert for Syamaya, there was no tension at all.

This was only natural because the Discipline Committee member serving as their guide was--

"....."

Walking silently all along, a glasses girl with braids. Not Syamaya.

Before setting off, they had confirmed that Syamaya was responsible for Class B Team 1.

The possibility of carrying out a scheme during the walk in the sea of trees had essentially vanished from that instant onwards.

She could not possibly abandon her assigned team. Besides, they did not think that she would able to find Kyousuke's team in this dark sea of trees to begin with.

Even if they might run into each other at the beginning or the end, they would be accompanied by other Discipline Committee members, so there should be no chance to make a move...

"That said... Why is that person walking with no hesitation at all?"

Feeling doubtful, Kyousuke stared at the back of the Discipline Committee member leading the way.

"....."

The type who looked like she was suited to silently reading a book in the corner of a classroom, she kept advancing calmly.

Despite lacking a map in her hand, her pace was steady all the way.

How exactly was she navigating this walk in the sea of trees?

"...Is it because of that?"

Eiri was pointing somewhere in front of the Discipline Committee member guide.

On the ground covered with exposed tree roots and fallen leaves, there was a snake.

Colored yellow indicative of poison, the snake was covered in geometric patterns. Most likely one of Busujima's "pets."

As though serving as the Discipline Committee member's guide, the snake was crawling slowly.

"Oh I see... It's Busujima-sensei's snake leading the way. That's quite amazing of the snake. No, I guess Busujima-sensei is the amazing one...? Either way, it's amazing."

"Mr. Snake and Busujima-sensei are amazing! Now we don't have to worry-- Right?"

"...Yeah. I guess getting involved with that teacher for a while should be okay? At least we don't have to worry about losing our way and dying out in the wilds."

"Th-Thank goodness..." Hearing Eiri, Maina was relieved.

Kyousuke also rubbed his chest and straightened his posture.

Once the fear of 'getting lost here meant staying here for the rest of his life' was dispelled, there was nothing scary about the walk in the forest of trees. Even though the Discipline Committee member leading the way was walking at a fast pace, it was not like there was difficulty keeping up. Neither did she cause any nuisance to Kyousuke's team.

"..."

Roughly separated by a distance of two meters, the Discipline Committee member walked alone without saying a word.

If anything, there was a slightly scary feeling indeed, hence Kyousuke stretched and remarked:

"Oh dear. The sea of trees is totally green. Isn't the air great too, Senpai?"

"...I see."

He tried to cheerfully make conversation with the upperclassman, but her response was very cold.

Kyousuke did not give up and continued trying to communicate.

"Given this refreshing and lovely environment, I'd really like to live in this sea of trees forever just like that."

"...I see."

--Yeah my ass. Throw some kind of retort back. Is this one of those long-running afternoon shows?

Although the air temperature was quite cold, the upperclassman's attitude was even colder.

"U-Umm... What's your name, Senpai? Come to think of it, I haven't introduced myself. By the way, I'm Kamiya Kyousuke! Fifteen years old."

"...I see."

"Uh, sure."

--The end. Kyousuke's name was Kamiya Kyousuke, no mistake, and his age was definitely fifteen.

A conversation could not get started successfully. Just as Kyousuke was feeling depressed about this, Eiri's sharp tongue struck:

"Even hitting on an senior student... You public enemy of women."

"Huh? I wasn't hitting on her. It's just ordinary chitchat."

".....So you're saying that I'm unwanted goods not even worth hitting on... Is that it?"

"Unwanted goods!? I-I didn't mean that at all..."

"..."

The girl who kept going "I see" turned her head back to glare at Kyousuke.

For some reason, the conversation was able to continue at this time...

Faced with those round glasses, pierced by that prickly gaze, Kyousuke could not help but show a wavering gaze.

"No, umm... Although there's nothing striking about the way you dress, I think your face is very well-proportioned. You're definitely crazy beautiful, Senpai! So 'not worth hitting on' totally doesn't fly--"

"...I see."

--No good. Interacting normally with this upperclassman was impossible.

Dubbing her Morita[2], Kyousuke felt utterly exhausted to deal with this Discipline Committee member who continued to walk forward unfazed. On the other hand, Eiri clicked her tongue.

"...So you want to hit on her after all. Incurable."

"Auau. D-Don't mind, Eiri-chan..."

"I'm the one who needs consoling, right? I'm not incurable, okay? Sheesh..."

Sighing from the bottom of his heart, Kyousuke readjusted his mood and walked again.

For a while, they advanced through the sea of trees silently. With dialogue interrupted, they were shrouded in astounding silence. Nothing could be heard apart from their footsteps.

Advancing incessantly through this unchanging scenery of trees for who knew how long--

[2] Reference to Morita-san wa Mukuchi

"...Time's up."

Morita suddenly stood still and said something other than "I see."

She looked at her watch.

Kyousuke also checked the issued watch to confirm the time.

16:30--According to the schedule, this was the time when the Walk in the Sea of Trees would end so that the next event, the Piranha Catching Contest, could begin. But oddly enough...

--What happened to the transition time?

Kyousuke did not recall anyone saying where the Piranha Catching Contest was going to take place, but looking around, there were no rivers or lakes. Neither were their signs of other students or Discipline Committee members.

Going by the rundown on the schedule, they were surely late for the event by now.

Morita turned around, standing slightly away from them, pushing her glasses up as Kyousuke and the rest watched in puzzlement.

At her feet, the snake was lifting its sharp head.

"Time's up...? No way, Senpai, are you lost...?"

"...I see."

"...!? What the heck do you mean by 'I see', you--"

"It is only natural that you'd get the wrong idea."

Interrupting Eiri's gruff outburst, Morita walked up.

Busujima's snake also approached with her.

"...Wrong idea?"

Eiri frowned. Morita ignored her question.

Passing by Kyousuke's group, Morita stopped three meters behind them then turned around again. Having reversed their positions, she then slowly took off her glasses.

Carefully folding the glasses and placing it in its box, she stuffed it into her skirt pocket.

Kyousuke and the rest could see sharp light from her unobscured eyes.

Then Morita spoke.

In a completely commanding, cold and emotionless voice, she announced:

"... Time's up. The current time is 16:30 and the Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation's 'Open-Jail School' hereby ends as planned. Dismissed on the spot. Before sundown tomorrow, please return by your own efforts. In case of accidents or if you attempt to flee and fail--What awaits you is harsh punishment. Please do pay attention. Well then, freshmen... Please take care on your way home."

--Way home? This is open-jail school, right?

" " "...?" " "

Having finished, Morita suddenly turned around and broke into a run.

The yellow snake also followed after her, gliding on the ground.

"...Tsk! Hold it right there!"

Eiri suddenly changed posture from standing upright, kicking the ground powerfully.

Her ponytail flew up at its very root while she rushed forward as though flying.

Dsspite Morita's excellent running technique, Eiri still held the advantage. She soon caught up. Just as she was about to catch Morita...

"..."

Morita tok out a palm-sized black object and released it towards Eiri.

Instantly, Eiri made an emergency stop and covered her ears.

"A stun grenade!? I should've known--"

--Instantly, there was a bright flash followed by a loud noise.

It was not that intense for Kyousuke and Maina, but Eiri was not so lucky, having caught the impact at point-blank range. She fell to her knees.

Soon after, Morita's running figure receded into the distance.

"Arghh, can't stand this... Totally shit! Well played, that ugly girl..."

By the time Eiri stood up again, Morita had already disappeared into the greenery.

"Eiri-chan!!"

"H-Hey... Are you alright!?"

"...I'm fine. It's not nonlethal. But I was careless... That Discipline Committee member was carrying a dangerous weapon. I originally wanted to interrogate her after capturing her... So stupid of me."

Eiri was gnashing her teeth in chagrin when Kyousuke and Maina ran over to her.

"Auau." Maina checked out the surroundings in panic.

"W-What to do... So the open-jail school ended just like that."

"Also, she even said 'as planned'? But the itinerary never mentioned it..."

Kyousuke put down his backpack and took out the guidebook to flip through.

No matter how many times he checked, it said three days and two nights for the open-jail school.

Day 1 Hell, Day 2 Purgatory followed by Day 3 Heaven.

Because it was still the second day, there should be more events scheduled.

But completely ignoring these prior arrangements, what on earth...

"Could it be a surprise?"

Eiri snatched the booklet from Kyousuke's hand and answered.

"......A surprise?"

"That's right. Although it doesn't make me happy at all... Look over there. There's a supplementary note."

Eiri spread the booklet before Kyousuke and Maina, pointing outside the border for the third day's schedule.

Written in small text:

※Planned simply means planned, nothing more. Subject to change without prior notice.

"...But that girl said 'as planned', right?"

"The planned schedule was altered as planned, right? Could it be that they never intended to follow the itinerary from the very beginning?"

Eiri shrugged and stared at the itinerary.

"Hell, purgatory then heaven. But rather than heaven arriving as expected, it's the continuation of purgatory... I can feel the organizer's malice. You can also see that all the events afterwards are totally not serious. Grand Mixed Bath Party, Dark Martial Arts Pillow Fight, SUMMER PANIC @ Limbo, Eye Candy Swimsuit Party... Unless they had no intention of following through in the first place, the ridiculousness of these events are totally off the charts."

"Ridiculous? Aren't these super fun..."

Mixed bath, pillow fights, summer festival, eye candy, swimsuits... etc. Attractive concepts one after another. If they were actually carried out, it would undoubtedly be heaven.

"...Yeah. For you, it'd surely be heaven... Especially the first and last ones."

Eiri closed the booklet violently and turned towards Kyousuke as though she was about to stab him.

"I think that this was also part of the school's intentions. Giving people something to look forward to, then a surprise push down the abyss of despair--No different from a sudden assault. Hiding deadly weapons and attacking without warning, repeatedly. We could have prepared ourselves mentally had we understood their intentions from the start, but... Anyone would be taken aback if told to 'return by our own efforts' so suddenly. That's probably their goal."

"I-I see..."

Given it was the Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation, this possibility was not implausible at all.

Thinking back, the room cleaning that had roused Kyousuke's suspicions was also undertaken with these predetermined conditions in mind.

The second night of the three-day-two-night trip was outdoor survival camping at night. What the heck kind of open-jail school is this?

"Awawa. W-W-W-W-W-What should we do...? Even if they let us go back from here, we don't know the way! Also, it took a long walk to get from the school to the Home of Limbo... Will we get back successfully? Auau."

Maina gazed around suspiciously, looking very panicked. Most of the students were probably cornered in the same situation right now. Abandoned in this sea of trees without any warning. This kind of anxiety and unease must be beyond ordinary people to withstand.

Even so, someone was still able to act calm--

"...Yawn. If the deadline's sundown tomorrow, that's ample time, right? If we hurry without spending the night out in the wild, we might even make it tonight. Even if we take it easy, there's plenty of time."

Showing sleepy eyes as usual, Eiri began to search her backpack.

"One chocolate bar, one 500ml water bottle... Two-thirds left, huh? We'll have to find our own water if we run out? Such a pain. Let's hurry back then."

After checking the rations that were issued as "snacks" before the walk and the remaining water in the bottle, Eiri started walking. Greatly surprised, Kyousuke frantically called to her."

"Hey Eiri! Even if you tell us to get back, but what about the route--"

"...I know the way."

Eiri turned around. Kyousuke could see a small knife, roughly 15cm in blade length, held in her hand.

Spinning the decorated hilt of her concealed weapon, Eiri closed one eye.

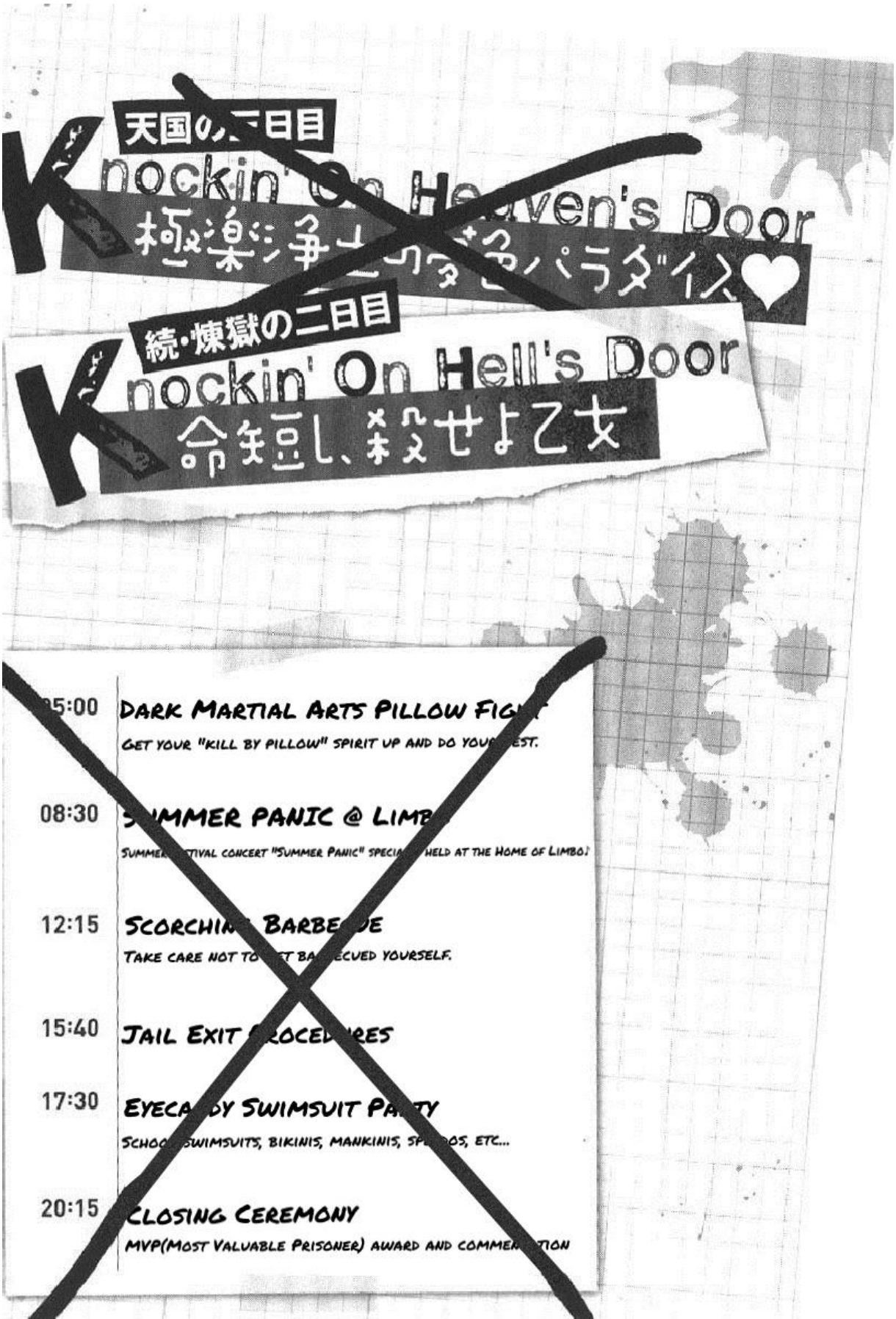
"This is for making marks on tree bark. In a disoriented situation like this, it's better to be prepared... Right?"

--Isn't this basic? Eiri tossed her hair and started walking again.

The knife had already vanished from her hand. Apparently, she had also concealed dangerous weapons smartly apart from her nails. Kyousuke did not know whether to say nothing less expected of her or something else...

Exchanging glances, Kyousuke and Maina followed after the reliable assassin of a classmate.

~~Day 3 Heaven - Dreamy Paradise of Heaven / "Knockin' on Heaven's Door"~~


天国の二日目
Knockin' On Heaven's Door
極楽浄土ドタバタパラダイス♥
続・煉獄の二日目
Knockin' On Hell's Door
命短し、殺せよ乙女
05:00 DARK MARTIAL ARTS PILLOW FIGHT
GET YOUR "KILL BY PILLOW" SPIRIT UP AND DO YOUR BEST.
08:30 SUMMER PANIC @ LIMBO
SUMMER FESTIVAL CONCERT "SUMMER PANIC" SPECIAL HELD AT THE HOME OF LIMBO!
12:15 SCORCHING BARBECUE
TAKE CARE NOT TO GET BARBECUED YOURSELF.
15:40 JAIL EXIT PROCEDURES
17:30 EYECATCHY SWIMSUIT PARTY
SCHOOL SWIMSUITS, BIKINIS, MANKINIS, SPEEDOS, ETC...
20:15 CLOSING CEREMONY
MVP(MOST VALUABLE PRISONER) AWARD AND COMMEMORATION

Day 2 Purgatory Continued - Life is Short, Kill Everyone, Girl / "Knockin' on Hell's Door"

"A slow walk from the Sea of Trees to the Home of Limbo takes about two hours. Sundown is before 19:00... So just to be safe, let's hurry. It'll be difficult to discern the marks once the sun sets."

In the almost pitch dark sea of trees, under Eiri's lead, Kyousuke and his team was making their way back along the route they had come.

Eiri would advance without stopping, every once in a while confirming marks made on the trees, further adding to Kyousuke and Maina's relief. "So amazing..." Maina exclaimed, impressed.

"Eiri-chan is so amazing! You're really not lost at all."

"The marks are spaced quite far apart... So you've really memorized it all?"

Still facing forward, Eiri coldly replied to Kyousuke's question.

"...Of course. The marks are just for confirmation after all. In the past, when I was abandoned as part of my family's 'education', it was deep in the mountains even more remote than this. And they even blindfolded me... Even the food and water now is miles better than that time's. This is so easy that it makes me yawn."

"Man, there should be limits to Spartan education... How long ago was 'in the past'?"

"--Five years old."

"Five years old!? Then that's just kindergarten, uh... I'm surprised you survived."

"Nothing much, that's just a beginning. Oh well, who asked my family to be so crazy."

"......Hmm."

Kyousuke was speechless in response to Eiri's nonchalant explanation.

--The Akabane family, where Eiri was born and raised, was a prestigious house in the field of assassination for many generations.

Eiri was a girl who had been born in an abnormal lineage, growing up in an abnormal family. Kyousuke could not imagine at all what feelings Eiri experienced when she declared her parents and siblings to be crazy. Neither was it possible to imagine at all.

For Kyousuke, family was irreplaceable. His most beloved little sister aside, the same even applied for those parents no matter how much they deviated from common sense, wandering all over the world, indulging themselves...

"...By the way, there's probably more that we need to look out for, right?"

Pulling Kyousuke back from his thoughts was Eiri's hard voice.

Kyousuke's team was surrounded by flourishing greenery. As though searching for presences hidden behind the trees, Eiri's gaze was sweeping around rapidly. Watching the side of her face, Kyousuke could not help but feel nervous.

"If that Syamaya girl is going to make a move on us, this is a god-sent opportunity for her. Or rather, now is the only chance for her to strike. Once the open-jail school outing ends and we return to normal classes, there won't be much chance for our paths to cross."

"Ah, that's true... You're very right."

Kyousuke nodded and gathered up his relaxed sense of wariness anew.

Inside the Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation, first-years were greatly restricted from interacting with the upperclassmen.

Although there was no school rule forbidding contact, there were very few chances for contact.

For Kyousuke and the other first-years, this open-jail school event was probably their first time catching glimpses of senior students. That was how distinctly they were separated.

Whenever contact was made, whether legitimate or not, it would become the center of attention. Inside the school, it would also attract the gazes of teachers. Conversely, without any other students or teachers present, they could do anything they wanted.

--Indeed, unrestricted killing was likewise not a problem.

"I can't believe the school would come up with this game... Letting murderers loose out in the wilderness. Isn't this beyond the level of a prison break? If students really fled, hid, or started slaughtering one another, how are they going to clean up..."

"S-Slaughtering one another... Awawa. W-W-W-W-W-What to do!?"

Kyousuke muttered with alarm while Maina timidly looked left and right.

"Nothing much--" Eiri confirmed a mark on a tree while speaking:

"Whether running away or anything else, the entire island is a prison. Even if you try to hide, there's no place to hide. As a result, the students are completely under their thumb no matter what they do. Letting murderers roam free is a perfect chance to check whether they've reformed themselves, right?"

"Yeah. I see now... Wherever there's resistance, that's where they'll apply greater oppression, is that how it goes?"

"I guess so, because there shouldn't be many students who'll go kill people just because they could. Most probably committed it under an extreme build up of negative emotions like resentment or hatred, then suddenly... Exploding from the stress, they finally turn feelings of 'want to kill' into 'must kill', right? Although I don't quite understand... I think that as long as they're not psycho killers like Renko, they shouldn't be killing people without hesitation. Because if killing is that easy, I--"

"..."

Kyousuke did not say anything to Eiri who had stopped, staring at her fingernails.

Even possessing outstanding skills and knowledge, this assassin was ultimately unable to deal the killing blow.

Hating killing, repelled by killing, Eiri spoke as though praying.

"To be honest I... don't think that girl will come, even though that girl Renko wanted to say something. Speaking of the Murderer Princess who had killed twenty-one, she's the current Discipline Committee Chair. She seems quite prideful and self-aware, having been disciplined by Kurumiya-sensei for the past two years. If she still wants to kill even after going through all that, then she'd be a totally incurable rabid dog... Speaking of the receiving a reformation test, doesn't that apply to serial killers too?"

Saying that, she started walking about.

"How reformed Syamaya-senpai is... huh."

As soon as Kyousuke mused, the shredded handkerchief surfaced in his mind, but he immediately shook his head to dispel the image.

"...Well, these are just my speculations. Staying on guard definitely won't be wasted. Definitely don't be careless. Not just that girl... There might be people or things who bear a grudge against us. You have to be careful."

"...Yeah."

"Y-Yes!"

Kyousuke and Maina nodded, chasing after Eiri.

Then just as their nerves were tensed...

--Rustle.

The sound of friction in the bushes could be heard.

" " "...!?" " "

The atmosphere instantly went tense as everyone turned around at the same time.

Instantly, a figure flew out of the bushes behind, jumping straight at them.

"Uwahhhhhhhh!?"

"Kyousuke!?"

"Kyousuke-kun!"

Seeing Kyousuke lose balance and pinned down helplessly, Eiri and Maina screamed.

"...Ku!?" Kyousuke hit the back of his head on a tree root and groaned painfully. As though trying to prevent him from escaping, hugging him tightly, the figure--a girl wearing a black gas mask--yelled happily.

"Found you! I finally found you, Kyousuke!!"

"Renko! Y-You... What are you doing here--"

"What, isn't it obvious!? Of course I came to find you! I'm so glad to see you... I'm so glad to see you! Let's kiss! Foosh."

"...Just go die already."

"Uhyaa!?"

Kyousuke rapidly backed away from the gas mask's ventilator that was approaching his lips.

Just as Eiri kicked as hard as she could with her loafer, she struck Kyousuke squarely in the lips.

"Guho!? My fucking mouth!!!"

"...Tsk. She dodged it again. So annoying. Disappear, slut."

Ignoring Kyousuke who was rolling on the ground, covering his mouth, Eiri glared at Renko impatiently.

Putting an index finger on her ventilator, Renko sighed with a "foosh..."

"I was worrying about you guys out of the kindness of my heart, but you say 'go die' and 'disappear' to me... That's so mean. Or perhaps you need to nurture some kindness, together with a chest to contain it?"

"Huh? I am very kind. I defended the lips that were almost taken in the commotion. What are you doing to Kyousuke?"

"You're the one I should ask what you're doing, Eiri! My lips were taken in a different sense!"

Kyousuke stood up, all covered in dirt, covering his kicked lips.

"Awawa, it's swollen like fish ovaries... Terrible." Maina cried out worriedly and began to pat the dirt off his gym clothes.

"Kyousuke!" Renko suddenly cried out and charged at him.

"Uwah... Aren't these splendid sausage lips now? Are you okay?"

"Okay my ass. This is the worst. And whose fault do you think it is?"

"You're right. How about you reflect a little, Eiri?"

"I'm talking about the two of you!!"

--Back to the main topic.

"...So? Why are you suddenly popping up here?"

"Like I said, didn't I say already? I hurried over because I was worrying about you all."

Rubbing the bump on the left side of her head, Renko answered.

"Hurried over...? You were looking for us in the sea of trees?"

"Yeah."

"...How did you find us?"

"I heard you screaming in your heart that you wanted to see me."

"......How did you find us?"

Kyousuke raised his fist again, causing Renko to cover her head with her arms with a "Kyah!"

"A-At first, I heard a very very very~ large explosion. Then thinking 'no way' I came over for a look then heard your voices... Then I finally discovered you guys, something like that? Umm, Kyousuke... If you accept my explanation, could you lower your fist?"

"...I see. By the way, how far away were you originally?"

"Muu~, actually quite far, I guess. After hearing the explosion, I rushed over immediately... Then finally saw you guys just now. So, there seems to be no other groups nearby, right?"

"Yeah. I see huh... Then that means we might not run into another group any time soon."

Seeing Kyousuke put his fist down, Renko sighed "foosh..." in relief.

Rubbing the bump on the right side of her head, Eiri frowned.

"...Huh? What about your teammates? Did you abandon them?"

"Yes."

"What the heck yes... Is that really okay?"

"Probably."

"Probably..."

Renko puffed out her chest and laughed "foosh" while Eiri stared at her.

"Don't worry. Even the Discipline Committee upperclassman who tried to escape was caught securely by us."

" " "Eh!?" " "

Hearing Renko's offhand revelation, the trio was greatly surprised. To think they pulled it off successfully, hey...

"By now, she's probably getting this and that done to her, turned into a rag. An upperclasswoman with croissant-like hair. Her shirt got caught and she fell down on her own."

--Is she Maina!? What a clumsy senior student.

Renko said that she had fallen over on her face spectacularly after delivering the announcement... She's probably thinking of suicide in this Sea of Trees, given how totally lame her performance was.

"...So that's what happened. Then I'm going back with you guys. Syamaya-chan is also missing. If she attacks while my team was making our way leisurely back and stole my Kyousuke's life, it'd be a total loss... So just in case of a sneak attack any time, I will protect you properly... Oh, but conversely, I might attack you? Especially at night. Foosh."

"Th-That's even scarier..."

--Like what I suffered last night, no thanks.

Because I'll die from massive blood loss... Ever since enrolling in this school, this was his happiest but greatest crisis.

Eiri stepped between the approaching Renko and Kyousuke.

"No problem, I won't let her succeed. When the time comes, I'll--"

"You'll attack me too? Then there's no different from getting attacked by Renko!?"

"Huh!? O-Of... Of course not! What are you talking about? Are you retarded!?"

"Awawawa. Don't fight, you two!"

"Yeah, Maina is right. After all, Kyousuke only has only one body, so let's all love each other and have a threesome together! Let's all make babies and memories together."

"......Hey. Cut the nonsense and let's hurry back."

Kyousuke started walking after speaking in a totally weary voice.

The road back to the school seemed endless.

Let's hope nothing major happens along the way--Kyousuke prayed sincerely.

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"Shuko. Wonderful... You finally pulled out, Kyousuke? (bashful bashful)"

"...Yeah. I finally got out from the sea of trees."

Spectacularly ignoring Renko who was waiting for a reaction to her dirty joke, Kyousuke wiped the sweat off his forehead.

They had been walking for roughly an hour and a half in the sea of trees. Under Eiri's guidance, they had left the sea of trees safely, making a stop at the Home of Limbo first. The intense sunlight had died down as the sun gradually sank in the west.

"..Hey, what should we do? Stay at the Home of Limbo until dawn or go back right away?"

Walking in the lead, Eiri turned around and asked them how to proceed.

"By the way, I recommend the latter. Staying overnight outdoors, no thanks. I really want to relax and go to bed after a bath... Asking me to sleep without removing my makeup, absolutely impossible."

Worrying about such matters in this kind of situation, how fitting of Eiri's style.

"Can't we sleep inside the Home of Limbo... Are the gates still open?"

"80% to 90% chance of being locked, I'd say... Even so, let's check just in case. If we can't find a place to sleep, then let's hurry overnight back to school. Do we all agree?"

"...Yeah, I'm fine with it. I remember the way clearly."

"Me too, no problem! ...As long as we take breaks once in a while."

"Got it. I've no objections. What about you, Renko?"

Kyousuke nodded at Eiri and Maina, then turned to Renko at the back of the group.

Having pulled back some distance away from Kyousuke and the others, Renko was standing arms akimbo, turning her face away with a "hmph".

"...What are you getting mad about?"

"You're so cold, Kyousuke. I was clearly making hints already but you refused to do any inserting! Before, you'd always blow your load so intensely. So mean, I can't believe you're getting off on negligence play..."

Saying that, Renko slumped her shoulders in dejection to express "depression".

Kyousuke and Eiri exchanged glances then sighed from the bottom of their hearts.

"Hey Kyousuke... Isn't it fine if we ignore Renko's opinion anyway?"

"You're right. Then let's continue and leave Renko there. That's the decision, everyone agree?"

"I'm fine with it too! ...Just don't ignore me totally."

"Got it. I have no objections either. What about you, Renko?"

With Renko hammering her fists on his back, Kyousuke smiled wryly.

"Sorry sorry, it's just a joke. However, umm... Could you endure for just a while longer?"

If he got caught up in her pace throughout the entire trip back to school, he was going to keel over in exhaustion from all the forceful retorts Renko was expecting him to make.

"Okay, I get it... Sorry, I'm too frustrated by my desires. I'll try to endure. Then endure some more. If even after all that, I still can't endure... I'll make do with manual stimulation!"

" " "....." " "

"Okay, hurry up and say to me... 'Manual stimulation... What the heck is that?'"

" " "....." " "

"Sob sob. S-So embarrassing... Showing manual stimulation for everyone to see, it's too embarrassing!"

" " "....." " "

Ignoring Renko who was performing her own comedy duo routine, Kyousuke and the others quickly went to their destination.

After walking on a shaded woodland path, soon the towering walls and barbed wire fencing came into sight. Inside these confines was the Home of Limbo.

~Welcome to Limbo, fuckin' Pigs!!!~

The entrance, with the welcome sign hanging high above it, was locked up tight.

Giant padlocks and rugged chains of metal. It was sturdy enough to make one feel that they were making too much a deal out of it.

"Just as expected... Looks like it's totally deserted."

Looking through the wire mesh, they found the inside completely silent without any signs of life.

--Also, Kyousuke wondered about Mohican who was lying in the infirmary.

Even back when they were about to start the Walk in the Sea of Trees, he was still tottering on the verge of death, probably sent back to the school together with all the luggage. No matter what, he probably was not left behind just like that...

In any case, it looked like the Home of Limbo was already deserted.

"Foosh. Not a soul in sight. Looks like we got here the fastest without problems?"

"Yeah. After all, we made a beeline without getting lost... I feel like the other teams are still running in circles inside the sea of trees. It's all thanks to Eiri, seriously."

"Yah, Eiri-chan is so amazing! Too reliable, super cool!"

"Yo, flat chest! Or rather, no boobs! The representative of washing boards, Japan's number one!!!"

Faced with Kyousuke and the others making noise nonstop, Eiri scratched her face.

"...I-It's nothing. This is just trivial stuff. People who don't pay attention are just idiots, that's all. So, praising me isn't going to make me happy, okay? Also, Renko should just go die already!"

"Uwahhhh!"

Eiri's embarrassed look, unable to conceal her thoughts, suddenly changed as she unleashed a mid-level kick.

After making a wry smile towards Renko who was yelling "So dangerous, sheesh! Down with violence!", Kyousuke asked:

"...So, what are we doing now? It'll be difficult to walk once it gets completely dark. Are we continuing to walk with the sun setting? Or take a short break nearby first..."

--It was currently 18:30, less than half an hour before sundown.

"Either's fine with me. As long as there's the moon, it won't get so dark that I can't recognize the way. Even if we rest here, I don't mind... How about you, Maina? If you're tired, let's take a break."

"Oh, no... I'm fine! Let me push on for a while longer!"

Maina clenched her fist and mustered her spirit. However, her bangs were already stuck entirely to her forehead due to sweat.

Renko laughed "foosh" and placed her hand on Maina's shoulder.

"Pushing yourself too hard is not recommended, Maina, you know? If you don't rest when it's time to rest, you won't be able to handle unexpected events. Our destination isn't somewhere we can reach in short time... So we have to get back safe and sound. Relax first, then try your best, okay?"

Maina made a stiff look, staring at Renko's black gas mask.

Then shyly, she bowed her head and murmured politely:

"Oh... O-Okay. You're right... Umm, if that's the case, let me rest... for a bit, really, just a bit, okay? ...I'm so sorry."

"Yeah, I don't mind. In fact, I'm a little tired..."

Renko nodded and lifted up her massive bust as though dredging something with her hands.

"Oh my oh my, large boobs are such a pain... So inconvenient when walking long distances. It must feel so unburdened to have a toned and light body like Eiri's... By the way, Maina, you're quite stacked actually. What cup size do you have?"

"Eh!? U-Umm... I-I'm... Umm..."

Thrown a question by Renko in an unexpected manner, Maina's gaze wavered between Renko and Eiri.

As though trying to block Kyousuke and the others' gazes, she covered her chest with her arms.

"I-I'm... definitely not as toned as Eiri, but... I don't have Eiri's wonderful figure either, also... I can't compare with S-Syamaya-senpai either on the other end, so, I'm not big at all--"

"What was that about me, Igarashi-san?"

"Oh no... Nothing at all! I'm just saying that I lose completely to you in both boobs and figure, Senpai! A shorty like me can never win no matter how hard I try... Eh? Ehhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!? Cha, Chachachacha, Chamaya-chenpaiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii!? You're heeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeere!?"

Hearing Syamaya's voice suddenly appearing without warning from behind, Maina turned around in surprise.

Still sitting exhausted on the ground, she rapidly slid backwards with a rustle.

Hiding behind Eiri's back, she was trembling all over.

" " "......!?" " "

The tension level in Kyousuke's group shot through the roof.

on the other hand, Syamaya was exuding an air of quiet calm as always.

"Ufufu, how beautiful and clear the moon tonight."

A pale and lovely smiling face.

Under the inky sky, she was dressed in her uniform, carrying a backpack, standing there.

Holding her hair down, looking up at the moon, she was as beautiful as a completed painting.

"......Syamaya, -senpai."

Seeing Kyousuke call out her name in surprise, Syamaya beamed even more.

"Good evening, Kamiya Kyousuke-san. Akabane Eiri-san. Hikawa Renko-san. As well as--Igarashi Maina-san. You have arrived with such alacrity that I was startled.

Who could have expected you to exit the sea of trees so rapidly. You must have gone through plenty of hardship."

Sweeping her gaze over Kyousuke's group, Syamaya placed one hand on her chest.

Her relaxed gestures were no different from usual.

But very mysteriously--

Why was Syamaya walking here alone?

"...What about the teachers and the other Discipline Committee members? Are they nearby?"

"No." Syamaya answered Eiri in a dry voice, shaking her head.

"We of the Discipline Committee were dismissed naturally after informing each team of their final task. There's probably no one here. The teachers should be back at the school by now, taking a relaxing break."

"...Then why are you here?"

Eiri asked Syamaya the same question that was running through Kyousuke's mind.

Piercing Eiri with her gaze, Syamaya looked down.

"I love nature. Especially nature at night... Also, it's a beautiful full moon tonight. I was planning on enjoying some moonbathing while making my way back in leisure. Hence, I encountered everyone here by chance. Ufufufu. Indeed... Purely by chance."

Saying that, Syamaya placed her hand on her lower lip.

Cocking her head slightly, with a friendly smile, she looked like she was trying to deceive Kyousuke's group--

"However... I believe this is not coincidence but inevitable fate. How's that? Everyone--Encounters are fate. As the reward for getting out of the sea of trees first, allow me to tell you all the 'shortcut' back to purgatory, okay? Ufufu, once

we return to school, opportunities to see each other will be very limited, so please indulge me by accompanying me on the return trip. I like each and every one of you so much. I also wish to understand all kinds of things about you all... even more, even deeper."

--May I? Syamaya smiled.

Her emerald eyes seemed to possess deadly charm that was impossible to refuse.

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"Everyone, let's all run towards the full moon. Ready, set... Go!"

Towards the moonlight seeping in through the foliage, Syamaya sprinted at full speed.

No one followed her as the image of her back receded into the distance.

"What the heck is this, what a pain..."

"...Why must we go back together with that girl?"

"Awawa. I-It'll be fine... right? Nothing's gonna happen, right?"

"Shuko... As long as the Discipline Committee Chair is on watch, I'm sure Kyousuke isn't going to do anything indecent."

In the end, Kyousuke's group was forced to accept Syamaya's suggestion.

Under Syamaya's lead, they were currently walking through the mountain.

Although Kyousuke no longer had to fear getting attacked by Renko, now he needed to stay on guard against Syamaya and her unknown intentions, doubling his mental fatigue. Also...

"Seriously! What are you all doing back there!? Please follow me closely. Are you giving up just because of this bit of fatigue? Show some energy!"

Turning around in the distance ahead to face Kyousuke's group, Syamaya raised her fist and yelled furiously.

Kyousuke did not know whether he should call her excited or excessive in energy.

"Syamaya-senpai... Why are you so energetic?"

Having shown his fatigue quickly, Kyousuke asked, causing Syamaya to answer with a cheerful smile:

"Ufufu. Isn't it obvious... Of course it's because of this unexpected reunion with you all! This open-jail school event is a precious chance for we senior students to interact and bond with the new students... When such a rare opportunity descends upon us, we have to muster our energy of course!"

"...I-I see."

Kyousuke was pushed back by the vigor of her honesty and delight.

Syamaya nodded forcefully.

"Indeed. Among them, especially you four... There is so much that I'd like to talk to you about. For example--"

Placing an index finger on her cheek, Syamaya looked up at the night sky.

From between her lips, her pure white teeth and light pink gums could be seen.

"What kind of murderers are you?"

She threw out this question.

Under the moon's shining light, she looked at everyone's face in turn. Placing a hand on her chest, she closed her eyes and monologued quietly.

"I have experienced all sorts. Methods of killing, victims of killing, locations of killing, all sorts... However, my motive has always been one only. Know what it is? Do you know why I committed murders in the past...? Ufufu. It's actually very simple, a reason very easy to understand, you know?"

That was--

"Because I love it."

Smiling enthusiastically, she opened her eyes that were filled with clear light.

Because her words were too simple, the audience could not understand for a moment.

"...Eh? ...Huh? L-Love...?"

From Eiri's lips came a dumbstruck voice.

Syamaya nodded and answered slowly:

"Indeed. All of you must have all sorts of things and activities that you love so much that you can immerse yourself in them, right? Reading, music, drawing, sports, cooking, romance... In my case, it's killing. I kill people because I love killing. Nothing deep, just this simple motive. Methods of killing, victims of killing, locations of killing... These come with myriad variety, chosen to allow me to experience all sorts of killing behavior. For example--"

Syamaya narrated about all the homicides she had committed to this date.

Using kitchen knives, ice picks, hand axes, golf clubs, multipurpose scissors, wine bottles, ribbons, hydrochloric acid, bricks, rifles, electric drills, gasoline, bathtubs, sulfuric acid, electric guitars, chainsaws, spoons, western archery, Japanese swords, bush knives, barehanded--She had killed people, one after another.

Narrated, narrated, narrated, narrated, narrated.

Moving her body and gesturing with her hands interchangeably, she kept narrating as though possessed.

"Take reading for example. After finishing a story, you'll want to read other stories, right? You'll want to read different stories of the same style as well as different stories of different styles... However, there won't be bibliophiles who keep reading the same book over and over again. In the same vein, having experienced killing once, I wanted to seek out other kinds of killing experiences. Stabbing, bludgeoning, strangling, poisoning, shooting, crushing, drowning, burning... Or using the same method of killing but trying it out on different targets. Sex, age, identity, job, nationality, ethnicity, religion... I wanted to achieve happiness

through all sorts of interactions! Ufufu. Called the Murderer Princess in the past, I killed all sorts of people, with all sorts of murder weapons, using all sorts of killing methods, killing them in all kinds of places, and the only reason running through all these is this one. Naturally, I cannot understand the feelings of people who kill when they clearly don't like the act... What about you? Why did you become murderers?"

Asking, she turned her gaze towards Kyousuke.

Only pure curiosity resided in her eyes.

Right now, Syamaya was no different from a bibliophile talking endlessly about books.

However, she was not someone obsessed with books but someone obsessed with murder--pure killing mania.

The girl, who liked killing even more than eating, spoke as though she was talking to a kindred spirit:

"Kamiya-san... You have killed twelve, haven't you? --Why? For the sake of happiness, one would expect, yes? If it didn't feel happy, you wouldn't have killed twelve, right? Also, it was all at once. I have never had the experience of killing twelve people on one occasion. I feel very interested... Could you tell me about the experience in detail?"

Stared at by those widened eyes at an extremely close distance, Kyousuke panted.

"Oh..... In detail... huh?"

"Yes, in detail. I want to know you..."

"--Don't touch him."

Syamaya's hand, reaching for Kyousuke's cheek, was grabbed from the side.

Eiri's eyes were exploding from anger as she glared at Syamaya.

"Don't touch Kyousuke."

"....."

Shocked by the overt hostility, Syamaya stared at Eiri with a surprised expression.

Her widened eyes narrowed as her lips grinned.

"...Ara ara, ufufu. My apologies? Speaking of which, you are very interested in Kamiya-san too, Akabane-san. I am also quite interested in you who have killed six. For example, there's your forceful attitude. Even after knowing I have killed twenty-one people before, you are completely unafraid. This is the first time I feel so accepted by fellow students, you know? Ufufufufu."

Syamaya smiled seductively being held by the wrist.

Eiri's eyebrow jumped as though in surprise. She spoke as though timidness was beginning to sprout within her:

"Huh? W-What the heck is that... Are all the people around you that pathetic?"

Syamaya nodded at Eiri's offensive remark.

She turned towards Eiri again and continued:

"On the first day of enrollment, after I heard from my homeroom teacher Kurumiya-sama that this is the school where murderers are gathered, my heart began to race, you know? Because I was going to find a large number of peers who had the same hobby and interests. For me who was seen as taboo by the outside world, unable to talk to anyone about murder, I was filled with delight. While listening to my classmates introduce themselves with great individuality, I looked forward to my debut. And then it was my turn... I couldn't be more happy, unable to suppress that powerful feeling in me! I talked about how much I loved to murder, how wonderful it was to murder, all the victims I had murdered so far, the murder weapons and the circumstances they were used, what kinds of killing methods, how I felt at the time, the victims' final appearances... I revealed everything that was hitherto hidden deep inside my heart, together with my feelings! And can you guess what happened?"

A layer of gloom shrouded her bright smile as her voice suddenly went low.

...As though she was sadly recalling how she felt back then.

"...All the classmates were frozen. Fear, surprise, revulsion... None of the admiration, curiosity and resonance I was hoping for. In my depression and confusion, I talked to a girl. That was the one who had introduced herself just before me, singing praises that 'murder is the supreme happiness', showing off how she killed people. I was thinking someone like her should be able to share my joy in murder so I hastily invited her and took her out. However--"

Syamaya's voice became even lower.

Her face was colored with lamentation and disappointment.

"Once we were alone, her attitude suddenly changed as she wept and apologized. She said... She was only bluffing to make herself seem 'special' in a school filled with murderers. At the time, I suffered an unprecedented shock. By the time I regained my senses, I really wanted to slaughter her on the spot! But before that could happen, I was swiftly bludgeoned by Kurumiya-sama. Ufufu.."

" " "....." " "

While Syamaya was laughing dryly, Kyousuke and the others stayed silent.

My life would definitely be over if I had been assigned to Syamaya's homeroom at the time.

Despite her saying that she "had been rehabilitated"...

"Ever since, the passion for murder, burning intensely in my heart, rapidly cooled off. Although there were a few people who tried to approach me, but a little bit of toying soon exposed the weakness of their true forms, greatly disappointing me. Every time I suffered strict discipline, I felt more depressed. In this way, my passion for murder has been lost completely..."

--I used to think it was completely lost. Syamaya whispered.

Crossing her arms behind her back, she slowly swept her gaze over Kyousuke's group and their surroundings.

She examined Kyousuke, Eiri, Maina and Renko's faces in sequence.

"However, most likely I... seemed to have mistaken one fact. What I lost was not the desire to kill, but targets. Like a bibliophile who failed to encounter a book one would desire to read and thirst to know its contents... I have simply failed to encounter a target who instills in me the wish to kill, the wish to see what they look like in their final moments."

" " "......!?" " "

Listening to Syamaya, Kyousuke's group finally exploded with acute tension this time.

Only one person, Renko, laughed with a "foosh" and asked leisurely:

"In other words, this is what you mean? You intend to kill us all next?"

--Syamaya's footsteps suddenly halted.

With a gentle breeze blowing, cacophony akin to a tide was born.

"How unpleasant, Hikawa-san. Intending to kill you all, impossible..."

Standing with her back towards Renko, Syamaya laughed humorously.

"Rather than intend, I will kill you all. That is the shortcut leading to purgatory."

--A light whisper. In that instant...

Syamaya swung her right arm towards Renko.

Held in her hand was a hatchet whose blade measured over 30cm.

Bathed under moonlight, the gray-black blade shone as though it were wet.

"Crap, Renko! Hurry and dodge--"

--Clang.

As Kyousuke yelled desperately, Renko turned her head with a "...Hmm?" The hatchet swung down. As though chopping firewood, there was no hesitation at all in Syamaya's movements.

The thick blade was swung down using its own weight in a strike that could easily shatter a skull.

Accompanied by the dull noise of solid objects colliding, Renko was sent flying to the side. A bright red liquid splattered from the right side of Renko's head.

Lying on the ground just like that, Renko did not show any response.

...Motionless, not even twitching, it was like she was dead.

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"...Ara? You've already passed away, Hikawa-san?"

Throwing off the hindering backpack, Syamaya remarked, her fun ruined.

Renko made no sound, her silver-white hair was dyed with bright red highlights.

Looking down at the silent gas mask in amusement, Syamaya readied the hatchet again.

Rather than one-handed, she held the deadly weapon with both hands up high, swinging down forcefully.

"I still haven't heard your final death cry, you know? Time to wake up!"

--Clang!

Again, she chopped at Renko's head with all her might.

New red highlights were added to Renko's hair with the splattering of blood.

But Renko still remained unmoving.

Stepping on Renko's shoulder, Syamaya pulled out the blade embedded in Renko's head, meanwhile going "..Oya?" with a frown. She was staring at the surroundings of the wound, covered by hair.

"Could she have actually died? After all, I did hit her in a bad place. But then again, the sensation is a bit strange... Are human skulls that hard? I've no idea since it's been so long and I'm getting rusty. A blank period. This is unusual. To get back my senses, I'll need to chop many more places then dismember the body--"

"Ah..... Ah... Ah-ah..."

"...Yes?"

Hearing a sudden sound, Syamaya slowly turned her head with the hatchet still raised.

Her narrowed eyes widened then narrowed again.

"Oh I see, I almost forgot amidst my excitement. There are other prey tonight. Killing so many people at once is actually a first time for me... It's making my heart quicken and pound. Ufufu. Let me see how you look in your final moments, let me hear how you scream in your final moments--Igarashi-san?"

"...Kyah!?"

Frozen by the sound of Syamaya's laughter, Maina fell on her ass.

While Maina was trembling with her face twitching, Syamaya slowly approached. Fresh blood was dripping off the lowered tip of her hatchet's blade.

"Ah.. Ahhhh... Renko-chan... Renko-chan..."

Wavering her gaze back and forth between the bloodstained hatchet and the collapsed Renko, Maina burst into tears.

Syamaya's face went twisted in ecstasy.

"Bitch... Even at death's doorstep, you still continue your little act? This is your comeuppance. Stop it with your petty tricks and show your true nature."

"...E-Eh? Act... True nature... P-Petty tricks?"

"Indeed, petty tricks. Despite limited foresight, you think you're so clever... The same goes for during the outdoor cooking. You tried to kill me a number of times, yes? And to think you pretended that they were all accidents! Finally, tampering with the cooking... Everything you've done is nothing but a petty trick."

Looking at Syamaya who had her hand on her cheek's gauze, Maina shook her head.

"Eh!? No, n-n-n-no, no! I-I only cooked normally, I didn't... I absolutely have no intention of killing you, Chamaya-chenpai. All that happened totally by--"

"This is all your act, isn't it? Rather than 'Hueeh!?', a mere petty trick... Well, whatever. Everyone shows their true face on death's doorstep. Even a noble-minded gentlemen will cast away his principles to beg on the ground. Even a cordial and gentle lady will start cursing with a face like a demon's. Even a frivolous and humorous man will accept death without any punchlines... That is what I believe--The instant just prior to death is when all sorts of true natures will be revealed. Using fear and suffering leading straight to death, baring naked hearts to be admired at one's leisure... This is also one of the wonders of murder."

--Hence.

"Having killed repeatedly, seeing the final moments of who knows how many people, I suddenly wondered. My father and mother, who had lavished me with loving care and affection as their single child, I wondered if they would continue to love me to the very end..."

Hence, Syamaya--

"Ah, I wanted to try killing them... I really wanted to kill them and see. This thought bothered me so much that I rapidly went and killed them. In the end--In the end, it was glorious! Hearing my question while I was splattered all over with blood, holding the dagger, my father still replied 'I love you.' As a reward for baring his heart to me, I opened my father's heart for him! Hugging my blood-splattered body tightly, my mother cried. From the countless, innumerable times

my mother called out my name, I could feel deep love. Hence, I strangled my mother to death with love no less than hers! I was so happy... While experiencing concretely my parent's love for me, I immersed myself in bliss. The emotions born then cannot be described in words..."

" " "_____" " "

Facing Syamaya who was recounting the tragic past with an ecstatic look on her face, Kyousuke and the others were speechless.

--This girl was the real thing. A real and veritable psychopath.

Prompted by a wish to understand, she would go as far as to cruelly slaughter her victims just to gain an understanding of them.

Both Syamaya's interest and love were linked to the act of murder.

Hence, Syamaya killed her parents and now she was going to kill Kyousuke's group as well...

"Ufufu. Then allow me to confirm once again. Igarashi-san? Confirming the real you... through your death! As the reward for almost killing me, let me shred you into a million pieces."

Syamaya swung the bloodstained weapon towards Maina's deathly pale face.

Her emerald eyes were filled with murderous intent while the hand gripping the hilt was full of power.

Maina closed her eyes in resignation, clutching her head and screaming "E-Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeek!?"

Just as Syamaya was about to bloody the hatchet's blade using Maina's blood after Renko's...

"...What are you doing?"

--A low voice. "...Huh?" Before the surprised Syamaya could look back...

"What are you doing, bitch!?"

Accompanied by heightened emotions, a kick was delivered to the side of Syamaya's face with god-like speed.

"Ka!?"

Unable to withstand the impact, Syamaya dropped the hatchet from her hand while she swayed unsteadily.

Seizing the opening when Syamaya had lost balance, the assailant instantly landed a shoulder strike.

"...!?" Syamaya was held down helplessly with the attacker--Eiri--sitting astride her. Riding Syamaya, Eiri held her upper body down, groaning:

"How dare you, how dare you... try to kill Renko...!"

While speaking in a trembling voice, Eiri held a knife in her hand.

Pressing the knife against Syamaya's windpipe, Eiri sealed off her movements.

Syamaya turned to stared into Eiri's eyes with a dazed expression.

"Y-You... were concealing a deadly weapon--"

"Why?"

"...What?"

"Why kill Renko!? Aren't you the Discipline Committee Chair!? Aren't you properly reformed!? Didn't you say... You're not going to make a move on us. Even with the authority to discipline students, you absolutely won't--"

"Indeed. Of course I won't be disciplining anyone. Is there a problem?"

Interrupting Eiri's accusations, Syamaya nonchalantly explained:

"I will not subject my murder targets to violence. Furthermore, I don't like violence, you know? I like killing. The half-baked violence used in discipline--

violence that cannot kill the person--I will never use that! If I were asked to discipline you, I... will surely fail to hold back and end up killing you directly. Killing students openly as the Discipline Committee Chair would make for a huge issue, right?

Faced with Syamaya's verbal deluge, Eiri bit her lip.

"What is this...? What rehabilitation... You haven't reformed yourself at all!"

As though exasperated by Eiri's accusations, Syamaya closed her eys and smiled.

"Returning to normal from a state where I am unable to derive pleasure mentally or socially--Indeed, I have not been rehabilitated in this sense. Nevertheless, Akabane-san... Doesn't the meaning of rehabilitation refer to processing unusable things to render them useful?"

" "Wha..." "

Hearing Syamaya imply something in her message, Eiri stared wide-eyed.

--Processing unusable things to render them useful.

For someone who knew the school's true purpose, these were words that could not be ignored. Confirming the reaction of Eiri--then Kyousuke's--Syamaya lost her smile.

"Ara... You two already know? Concealing a weapon in this school, the skills and physical abilities to restrain me effortlessly... There's nothing amateur about you. Akabane-san, are you already a professional?"

"....."

Eiri responded with silence to Syamaya's question. Then as though sweeping the question away, she asked:

"You know about... the school?"

Kyousuke and Eiri knew about the Purgatorium School of Rehabilitation's true purpose--An education institution aiming to "rehabilitate" unusable murderers by processing them into professional killers that could be used.

Judging from her behavior, it was clearly evident that Syamaya knew about the school's truth.

As expected, Syamaya rejected Eiri's question with a "Why, you ask...?"

"Although I have not concealed my surprise towards the fact that you two know of the truth... Oh well, this is fine as well. Given this rare chance, let me tell you. Do you know... why is it that just the first-year students are isolated?"

--That was what she asked. Her emerald eyes looked at Maina.

The only person present who was in the dark regarding the schools's true purpose. A "?" appearing over her head, Maina jumped in fright with an "Eh!?", answering in a panic:

"That's because, probably... Umm... The first-years haven't mended their ways yet in the beginning of school... So they're dangerous..."

"No, compared to first-years, the second-years, as well as we third-years who are even more senior, are more dangerous and more scary, you know? Ufufu, the reason is simple--"

Rejecting Maina's answer with a smile, Syamaya looked at Kyousuke.

Kyousuke was still standing frozen on the spot, not yet recovered from the shock of Renko's death.

"Because there are difference in the curriculum for first-years compared to second and third-years. Teachers use the first year to correct your twisted personalities while at the same time training basic physical endurance through penal labor twice daily. Through the merciless whip of education as well as an 'upgrading training camp' like the open-jail school this time, your minds and bodies will be thoroughly trained. Once that is achieved, courses in the second year will began to cultivate killers for real! Graduating after two years of 'killing

techniques', students will be sent to the underbelly of society rather than its surface. To spread their wings and soar as professional killers!"

" "......!?" "

Syamaya revealed a shocking truth.

"...Eh? K-Killers? Underbelly, of society...? What's, that...?"

" "------" "

The shock was obvious for Maina who learning about the school's truth for the first time, but even Kyousuke could hardly hide his shock as well.

Teaching how to kill inside a school... Absolutely unthinkable.

The challenge Kurumiya had issued Kyousuke was the condition that he must "survive the three years without killing anyone or getting killed by anyone" in order to return back to normal society after graduation. But with the latest revelations--

"...Hmm? Teaching killing techniques starting from the second year huh... Well then, do they really allow people to be killed? For example... In practical application lessons or something?"

Eiri probably asked this question partially due to Kyousuke's worries.

If such lessons existed, then graduating "without killing anyone" would be impossible.

The challenge issued to Kyousuke would be unattainable ultimately.

"Actual killing huh... There are no such courses at the current stage. Basically, it's all training. To turn amateurs like us into professionals, training us to kill skillfully. Speaking of killing, you must have experienced it already prior to enrollment, haven't you? All of you first-years should be the same, taking ordinary subjects properly in class."

" " "....." " "

Hearing Syamaya's reply, Kyousuke breathed a sigh of relief.

Eiri, who was unable to kill, and Maina, who was unwilling to kill, both felt relieved, their tensely knitted brows relaxing slightly.

Instantly, Syamaya's aura changed.

With a dark and glazed over look in her eyes, she stared at Eiri who was riding her.

"Then it's my turn to ask questions. Just as mentioned earlier, this school is for cultivating convicted murderers into full-fledged professional killers. But what I cannot fathom is why would someone like you, Akabane-san... Why would you appear in this kind of place?"

"...Hmm."

Eiri remained silent due to getting poked in a sore spot. Syamaya continued to question:

"Having become a killer already, why have you come to a professional training facility for cultivating killers? You should have mastered all requisite skills already. But in spite of that... Why? The teachers should have noticed already--"

"Shut up."

Eiri pressed on the knife held to Syamaya's throat, threatening.

"...Do you understand your position? Just answer my questions obediently and that's it. If you dare say anything redundant, I'll kill you immediately. With one cut from this knife, I'll sever your carotid completely."

"------"

Seeing Eiri's eyes filled with murderous intent, Syamaya closed her lips.

As though pressing against her, gazing into those rust-red eyes, she then said:

"...Ah, I see how it is now."

She smiled ferociously.

From the gaps in the upturned corners of her lips, her white teeth flashed.

"So that's why your weapon was concealed so well. Rather than evading detection, you made me overlook it... Ufufu, I see I see, now I understand. Ufufufufufu."

"……!?"

Faced with Syamaya who looked like she was enjoying something, Eiri's expression tensed up.

She bit her lip hard and exerted more force on the knife at Syamaya's throat.

Blood seeped out from the pale skin. Despite pressure on her windpipe, Syamaya did not stop.

"I see now... How could the teachers have failed to notice concealed weapons? Rather, they recognized that the person in question did not pose any real threat. In this school, you would do well not to believe what people say about themselves... How very very true indeed."

"...Shut up."

"You seem to have killed six. I have heard from various people from Class A that it's what you said in your self-introduction. But Akabane-san... You--"

"I told you to shut up!"

Yelling, Eiri was about to press on the knife with full force.

--But she did not do so.

Holding the knife, Eiri's hand was trembling slightly, her eyes wavering.

Syamaya's grin widened, showing insanity.

"...You are unable to kill. Perhaps you did not kill in the past, but it is definitely impossible for you right now. As one who intends to kill, I understand very well. There is no murder in your eyes. You--WILL NOT KILL ME!"

In the next instant, Syamaya moved.

Swinging her left arm whose movements were not sealed by the knife, she struck at the side of Eiri's face.

"...Ku!?"

As Eiri's expression stiffened, she swung her right arm.

Eiri dodged the thrust aimed at her throat by twisting her neck.

"Come, let me kill you!"

Then came a stab from the left side. As Eiri jumped off her body, Syamaya got up and fiercely pursued Eiri, grabbing the deadly weapon she had dropped--the hatchet--with her right hand.

"Let me show you how a model killer works!"

"...Tsk!"

--Dodging by a hair's breadth, Eiri could not hide the wavering on her face.

Her calm attitude changed all of a sudden, intimidated by the vigor of the pouncing Syamaya, overwhelmed. Syamaya pursued relentlessly as Eiri retreated repeatedly.

The hatchet was swung back and forth like mad, chopping, chopping, chopping, chopping, swirling a vortex of slashing death.

"Come come come come, let me kill you! Hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry! Let me kill you, I really want to see it! I want to see you crying in contrast to your forceful airs!"

"Ku... You lunatic...!"

Flying back and forth, yet definitely not swung at random, the hatchet's slashing attacks were correctly aimed at the vitals. Eiri repeatedly evaded the hatchet's blade by the slimmest of margins. Sometimes leaning her body, sometimes turning her head, sometimes using back flips, sometimes deflecting with the knife in her hand, sometimes jumping--

"Kyah!?"

Then Eiri fell over. She had probably failed to pay attention to where she was stepping due to focusing too much on the hatchet. This was an embarrassment that would be unthinkable for her usual, calm self.

"--Tsk!"

Although Eiri tried to pick up the weapon she had dropped, Syamaya rapidly rushed over.

Kicking the fallen knife away, she leisurely looked down at the unarmed Eiri.

".....Ah."

"Ufufu, sorry, Akabane-san. We members of the Discipline are not merely picked for our virtuous qualities but are also chosen for our excellent grades, you know? --Naturally, I am referring to our grades as killers. As I am the leader of the Discipline Committee that was chosen from outstanding students who distinguish themselves from among the strong, it is still slightly beyond you to go against I who have accumulated a year's worth of training."

Smiling contentedly, Syamaya continued to observe the cornered Eiri.

"Even so... You really look adorable here! Given this rare chance, allow me to slowly, delicately kill you. When the time comes, what kind of face are you going to make? What sounds am I going to hear? What kind of heart are you going to bare? Ah... I am so looking forward to it! Where should I start to break first? Fingers, arms, feet, calves, thighs, buttocks, the abdomen, shoulders, lower jaw, mouth, face, ears, nose, eyes... I must save the heart for last, yes? Ufufufu, ah, truly what a beautiful body. Before I break them, I must give you a good teasing first! Ha~ Ha~"

"......Eeek."

Having her body licked all over by Syamaya's insane gaze, a weak scream escaped Eiri's lips.

Her resolute face had turned completely timid with tears welling up in her eyes.

Eyes almost completely bloodshot, Syamaya began to pant even more violently.

"Y-Y-Y-Y-Y-You, what is this!? So cute... Too cute! Ha~ Ha~ This is already... I must kill you, sigh. I must tease you! Before you cry out, let's force you to make other noises first... Ha~ Ha~ Not screaming in pain but screaming in--!? No! Not allowed!!! My heart is dedicated entirely to Kurumiya-sama... But, you're really so cute... So cute that it's unbearable!!!"

"No... Don't!!!!"

"Stop it right now, bitch!!!"

Kyousuke charged at Syamaya who was wielding the hatchet.

As though blowing away the shock from Renko's death and his fear towards Syamaya, Kyousuke roared and charged kamikaze style towards the two girls that were stuck together.

Looking at Kyousuke in surprise, Syamaya then said:

"Don't get in my way!"

Quite emotional, Syamaya swung the hatchet with god-like speed.

The heavy blade, dyed bright red, went straight for Kyousuke--

"Ohhhhhhhh!"

Instantly, he deflected the hatchet by striking it from below with the back of his left hand.

"Wha...!?"

Syamaya was shocked by Kyousuke's extraordinary courage and reflexes. Aiming for the moment when Syamaya lost balance, Kyousuke released his tightened fist, throwing a punch at her. However...

"Don't underestimate me!"

Syamaya spun her body with customary flair, sweeping the hatchet horizontally behind her from the opposite direction.

"Wah!?"

Just as Kyousuke ducked frantically, the blade passed over his head, in other words, the position where his neck was an instant ago.

Kyousuke calmed himself with astounding speed, but his eyes could already capture the future.

In the instant the hatchet swept past, he kicked the ground and sprang like a sprinter's start.

" "......!?" "

The instant tackle he executed was just barely dodged.

But perhaps realizing Kyousuke's potential threat from these exchanges, Syamaya pulled back some distance, retreating roughly three meters. Swapping positions with each other, they entered a face off.

Syamaya adjusted her grip on the hatchet, casting a highly wary gaze at Kyousuke.

Having encountered an unexpected counterattack, she adjusted her irregular breathing while asking:

"You... Who on earth are you? Although your movements are totally amateurish, they are incomparably powerful. Physical capabilities aside, even your reflexes are terrifying. You seem quite accustomed to this? It has been quite a long time since I last met such a tricky opponent. You've made me lose confidence..."

--However, Syamaya tossed her hair.

Seeing Kyousuke standing in front of Eiri to shield her, Syamaya nodded with satisfaction.

"Kamiya-san... I am very interested in you indeed. Choosing not to run away when you've already become a target for murder, still stepping forward to save a

damsel in distress... What an excellent knight you are. What kind of face are you going to make during your final moments? Allow me to pluck off your gallant mask, to rip out your true face!"

Syamaya licked the blood stuck to the hatchet and revealed a smile.

As much as Kyousuke tried to find words to persuade her, it was useless. No matter what he said, he could not find anything that offered a ray of hope to stop this killing maniac.

"S-Syamaya-senpai..."

Hence, there was no choice but to use force to make her submit. He was still unsure whether he could do it without getting killed by Syamaya who had killed twenty-one victims in the past and was still honing her killing skills even now.

While Kyousuke was driven by fear and unease, Syamaya slowly lowered her center of gravity.

"Then allow me to greet you once again, Kamiya-san. Through the experience I have acquired over the course of twenty-one murders, combined with the crystallization of the skills painstakingly cultivated by the teachers... Please do enjoy thoroughly! I will take your arms, your legs, your brain, your heart-- Removing them cleanly and beautifully. Ufufu."

Syamaya mustered her vigor and readied her hatchet like a scythe.

The blood-colored heavy blade and her emerald eyes shone with cold light under the moon's illumination.

"Please stop, Syamaya-senpai!"

Instantly, a sorrowful cry was heard.

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"Please, stop it... Please stop, Syamaya-senpai..."

The repeated pleas caused Syamaya's smile to disappear.

The voice called out desperately to Syamaya who was wielding the hatchet in a stance, unmoving.

"Please please please, stop... Please don't hurt everyone anymore!"

Straightening her exhausted body, she called out forcefully once again.

Syamaya simply sighed without even looking back.

"...By this point, what are you talking about? Do you think this begging is going to make me go 'Okay, I understand' and agree to your request? There ought to be limits to frivolity. Trying to persuade me will simply make things worse. Fine, go ahead and tremble without saying a word. That suits you best--Igarashi-san."

"...!" Hearing Syamaya's words filled with mockery, Maina fell silent.

Bowing her head, she clenched her fists. In an almost inaudible voice, she asked:

"...It's all my fault, isn't it?"

"--What?"

Having turned her attention back to Kyousuke, Syamaya turned around in annoyance.

Lifting her stiff face, Maina gazed into those emerald eyes.

"Is it all my fault, Syamaya-senpai!? It's all because I did so many terrible things to you, Syamaya-senpai! That's why you can't stop yourself from killing all of us--"

"Perhaps so."

"......!?"

Hearing Syamaya's firm agreement, Maina's face froze.

Swinging the hatchet down, Syamaya touched the gauze on her face.

The side of her face was twisted from hatred.

"Regardless of reason, it is only natural to be furious... The taste of humiliation you gave me in front of everyone. Of course, that alone does not constitute the reason. There is also Hikawa-san's arrogant attitude of holding me in contempt, Akabane-san's defiant and oppositional behavior, as well as the indecent, depraved, vulgar and obscene existence known as Kamiya-san, impossible to accept on a biological level..."

Such mean words. This Senpai must be doing it on purpose.

"All this has infuriated me greatly. Furthermore, it is also why I am so interested in you all. Even without your tormenting me, I wanted to kill all of you in the first place. However, had all that not happened... I suppose, the situation would not have developed to this at least.

Staring at her bloodstained weapon and holding it up high, Syamaya mocked.

Having suffered chops to the head, Renko remained motionless... sprawled on the ground.

"Indeed, all of you were the ones who piled up the dynamite... But you are the one who lit the fire, Igarashi-san. if you didn't pretend to be clumsy, if you didn't pretend to make attempts at my life by accident, your friend would not have gotten hurt nor ended up killed. Indeed, that's the way things are... If it weren't for you."

"------"

The instant Syamaya asserted strongly, Maina's trembling suddenly stopped.

Her flaxen-colored eyes wide open, Maina froze speechlessly.

Syamaya sneered coldly at Maina's inability to respond, then turned towards Kyousuke and Eiri again.

"...Sorry."

Maina apologized in a tiny voice.

Eyelids lowered, shoulders slumped, Maina bit her lip hard.

Syamaya ran her hand through her hair angrily.

"Huh? If apologizing is enough to make me forgive you--"

"Sorry!"

Hoarsely, she apologized again.

Her eyes only saw Kyousuke and Eiri, as well as Renko lying on the ground, but not Syamaya.

Maina's voice was trembling, her eyes were trembling, her fists were trembling. Maina cried out:

"I only drag everyone down, can't help the slightest bit, I just make trouble for everyone... I'm so sorry! I know very well that apologizing doesn't solve any problems, I never thought of getting forgiven or whatever... But! I have to clean up my own messes at least! Even if it's me... Even if it's me, when I want to kill someone, I will do it!!!!"

--Instantly, Maina charged.

"Uwahhhhhhhhhhh!" She cried out loudly.

"Wha...!?"

As Syamaya was taken aback by surprise, she dashed in a straight line.

As though giving up on herself, she charged with reckless abandon.

" "Maina!?" "

Kyousuke and Eiri's screams overlapped. Syamaya turned towards Maina.

"What are you doing? Are you a fool? ...Are you in that much of a hurry to die?"

Syamaya tossed her hair and adjusted her grip on the hatchet.

Her surprise was evident in her voice.

--This was only expected. Maina was showing openings all over while her eyes were tightly closed.

Syamaya leisurely raised the hatchet and aimed a downwards chop at Maina's head.

"Uwahhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

However... Correction, rather, it was just as expected, Maina fell over spectacularly along the way.

Let alone defeating Syamaya, she self-destructed and fell on the ground without even touching Syamaya. "...Huh?" Syamaya lowered the hatchet and walked towards Maina.

"Ah... Seriously, I know. You're the clumsy girl, right? Then let me just chop open your regrettable head. Oh my oh my... It really makes me curious whether there's a brain inside. Well then, allow me to confirm--"

"Uwahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

"Gooff!?"

Who knew if it was because Maina did not notice Syamaya approaching, as soon as she got up, intending to charge ahead, Maina smashed her head into Syamaya's abdomen in a clean hit akin to a headbutt.

Frightened by the unexpected obstacle, Maina hugged Syamaya's body.

Her reflexive action immobilized Syamaya's arms.

"Ahhhhhphee!?"

--Sealed from breaking her fall, Syamaya was pushed towards the ground, back first, on a spot where there was large stone which very coincidentally, struck her in the head, causing her great pain.

"That really hurts!!!"

"Awa!? ...Ah... Here's the chance! Umm, umm... Eh!?"

Frantically getting up, Maina noticed. The weapon that Syamaya had dropped. The bloody weapon was within arm's reach.

"U-Uwahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

"Eh? Ah... Kyahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!"

Maina rapidly swung the hatchet with both hands.

Pinned down under her, Syamaya screamed, shutting her eyes tightly.

The hatchet was swung towards her face.

--Chop!

".....Ara?"

Syamaya opened her tightly closed eyes and made a vapid sound.

The blade, swung with Maina's full strength, had embedded itself in the ground, mere inches from Syamaya's face.

Syamaya looked at the blade, then the hands then at Maina's face.

".....Can't do it."

"Y-You--"

"Just as I thought, I can't do it! Killing someone on purpose... I can't do it!"

--Screaming, Maina looked like she was about to cry.

"Even though this school really is a place for training killers... I can't do it. I absolutely can't do it! Killing someone on purpose, I... I... 'd rather get killed myself! Sorry, everyone... I'm totally useless, sorry... Sob sob."

Her hand gripping the hatchet trembled violently. "Maina..." Eiri said softly.

After listening to Maina then looking at her face--A troubled look appeared on Syamaya's face, quickly filling up with the color of shame and anger. Gnashing her teeth loudly, she growled:

"...Why?"

Staring into Maina's eyes, she called out:

"Why, you bitch! How could you rather be killed than kill someone else, smartass, smartass... What are you trying to pull, smartass!? Your behavior just now... How can it not be on purpose--"

"It wasn't on purpose!"

In a loud voice that seemed as though it would smash apart Syamaya's heightened emotions, Maina roared.

Staring straight back at Syamaya who was backing away, Maina desperately stopped herself from crying.

"It wasn't on purpose... I've been clueless since a long time ago, can't think deeply, can't do anything right, almost making trouble for others... By the time I realized, I discovered I was already a hopeless person whose clumsiness could even kill people. But even so, I still have to say this. Even if it's me, I don't do it willingly... I definitely don't kill people willingly!"

"...You're saying you kill people out of clumsiness? This totally absurd notion..."

Should be impossible--That was probably the second half of Syamaya's sentence but she stopped talking.

A transparent droplet of water fell down on Syamaya's deeply frowning face.

"...It all started with a boy in my class. I became neighbors with him for the first time when they assigned seats back when we started middle school. A very kind person... He always helped clumsy old me no matter what. When I forgot things, he lent them to me. When I dropped my pencil case, he picked it up for me. When I fell over, he would stroke my head and help me put on bandaids. I wanted to reward him a little, to express my thanks, so I... For the first time in my life, I cooked. Seeing that he's always trying so hard in his club activities, I wanted to make a lunchbox for him."

--That was the beginning of everything. Maina's voice trembled

"During the lunch break on the first day of the second week... I mustered my courage to give the lunchbox to him. After staring wide-eyed, he smiled and

accepted it. I was so happy. My heart was pounding while I watched him eat my lunchbox. What kind of expression was he going to make, what kind of comments were he going to make, I was really curious. My heart looked forward to it very much. He first picked up a piece of fried egg with chopsticks and brought it to his mouth, then--"

Maina's lips pursed tightly, unable to make a sound.

Sniffing to stop her snot from flowing and swallowing, she tried to compose sentences.

As though about to spit blood, she made a sorrowful look.

"...After eating my cooking, he suddenly held his chest in pain. At first I thought he choked on the egg in his throat, but even an idiot like me instantly noticed that he didn't look right. He was breaking out in sweat on his face, his body trembling, his breathing getting difficult... My mind went blank. I don't quite remember what happened after that, just that I panicked and seemed to cause an unimaginable series of clumsy accidents... By the time I realized, everything had ended already. The chairs and desks around me were a total mess like after a hurricane... Several classmates who had been eating lunch next to me were smashed by furniture, fallen on the floor. He... He died. My cooking killed him. I-I--"

Raining down a shower of tears, Maina screamed.

"I killed him! Not just him... But also classmates, teachers, Syamaya-senpai... They got killed or got hurt because me. This is the truth, the indisputable truth! I cannot deny it! But I never wanted to kill at all... I never wanted to hurt anyone! Him, classmates, teachers, Syamaya-senpai, everyone, I don't kill because I want to, I don't hurt people because I want to! Even someone like me, honestly... I wish to get along with everyone as friends!"

"------"

The expression vanished from Syamaya's face that was looking up at Maina.

The rain of tears splattered on her.

"...Is that all you wish to say?"

--She asked. Emotionless, a dry voice.

At the same time, Syamaya's hand moved.

Pushing Maina's fingers, she snatched the hatchet's handle.

Even while her body trembled intensely, Maina desperately wiped her tears away.

"...Yesh."

She nodded lightly.

Hearing Maina's reply, Syamaya's eyes flashed for an instant.

"...Is that so?"

Gripping the hatchet with greater power, she raised her upper body.

"Then it no longer matters."

She embraced Maina gently.

With the hatchet embedded in the ground, freeing up both hands, Syamaya hugged Maina. Maina went "eh?" vapidly with a dazed expression, not offering any resistance.

Syamaya stroked the back of Maina's head and whispered softly:

"Killing people despite clearly not wanting to, that's probably even sadder than wanting to kill but being unable to. It's enough, Igarashi-san. My killing intent has dissipated completely... So, it's already enough. It's already... enough eh? Letting you continue to live will probably be a hundred times more suffering than letting you die."

"……!?"

A large volume of tears surged into Maina's eyes again.

Her expression suddenly collapsing, Maina buried her face in Syamaya's shoulder.

"Huehhhh

"Renko, you're... still alive..."

Seeing Renko stand up nonchalantly, Kyousuke stared wide-eyed.

Stroking her bloodstained hair, Renko nodded and replied "Yup, still alive."

"I only lost consciousness due to a concussion. The damage was also higher than expected so rebooting took a bit longer. Or maybe sleep mode was entered to speed up recovery... Well, whatever. In any case, I'm fine! When I'm in a crisis, the limiter's limiter, the Unlimiter, will activate and unlock. That's because when wearing the limiter, even my physical abilities are saved up in addition to the obvious sealing of murderous intent."

Next to the limiter--the black gas mask--Renko picked up a palm-sized rock and casually clenched her fist.

--Crunch. The rock shattered into particles of sand, falling through the gaps between her fingers.

"...Huh?" A sound escaped from Syamaya.

"W-Why? Why... aren't you dead!? I chopped your head open twice, how could you still live--"

"Chopped open? Fufu, don't be silly, Syamaya-chan."

Syamaya's voice trembled, then her shoulders followed as well. Renko jeered.

Making a gesture imitating a gun, Renko pointed her index finger at her own forehead.

"You didn't slice through at all, it just cracked a little. If you want to penetrate my skull, you'll have no choice but to fire buckshot at pointblank range multiple times. I suppose I'd die with a splattering of brains like a certain grunge band's vocalist if you do that? But trying to break my brain using human arm strength? Impossible. At least not with two or three hits. That's how I was made."

--Bang. Renko imitated the sound of pulling a trigger and firing a gun, then yelled aloofly.

Faced with Renko's unusual look, Syamaya became even more confused.

"...Buckshot? Made, like this...? I-I can't understand what you're talking about at all... W-What is going on... What is going on with you!?"

Exerting more force in her arms hugging Maina, Syamaya cried out.

Her voice was gradually shifting from surprise to fear.

Renko took a step towards the frightened Syamaya, spreading her arms wide.

Having taken off her cardigan, her white arms were revealed as well as the tribal-looking tattoos that almost covered the skin completely.

Dark pupils amidst ice-blue eyes were as sharp as daggers.

"...Me? I am the Murdering Mechanism, Murderer Princess. Although I'm very similar to you, I am a completely different being. If you ask why, that's because I was created simply for the sake of murder, order made to be Murder Made since birth. To me, murdering people is neither an interest nor a hobby nor a way of life, it's my raison d'etre. I cannot live if I don't kill. I don't gain joy in killing... Rather, killing is my existence itself, hence it is my happiness to begin with. You only live once, so wouldn't it be a crappy deal if you live life unhappily? Fufufu. --Oh by the way, my true identity is a secret so don't let anyone know, or you'll be dismembered, okay? I'm exposed even though I tried as hard as possible not to. Fufu. But it doesn't matter, Syamaya-chan... After all, you've already killed twenty-one people."

--She must have prepared herself to accept getting killed a very long time ago?

The instant Renko finished speaking, she sprang into action. With explosive leg strength far surpassing ordinary people, a separation of several meters in distance was meaningless to her.

"Ah... Eeeek!?"

Finding Renko instantly next to her, Syamaya stared wide-eyed. Renko's fingers buried into her throat that could only leak a weak scream. Just like that, Renko held her up in the air.

"Ack!?"

"Awa!? Whatsh hap'nin!?"

Pulled by Syamaya, Maina fell at Renko's feet.

"Stop... it, Renko-chan! It's already over! I know you're angry, Renko-chan... But Chamaya-chenpai won't hurt us anymore! So... please, stop it--"

"Maina."

While using just her right hand to strangle Syamaya's throat, Renko called to stop Maina.

She smiled sweetly at Maina who was looking up at her with moist eyes, going "...Hmm?"

"--It's very annoying, y'know?"

A low growl. A gaze as though looking at a pebble on roadside.

With dry murderous intent directed towards her, Maina went "Eeek!?" and let go in fright, flipping over.

Renko lost interest and shifted her gaze, continuing to exert power through her fingertips.

Watching Syamaya choke, she shook her head with a bored look.

"This is totally boring. It's like listening to a tired old melody of killing intent, yeah... A breakdown filled with violent loss of fidelity and going off-key. Unable to weave hatred and anger together, it's deathcore that's gone out of fashion. Oh well, these struggling breaths can still play a nice song. I was expecting great things from you, Murderer Princess."

Renko spoke lightly and released Syamaya's throat.

Then she effortlessly sent Syamaya flying with a kick to the gut just as she was collapsing to the ground, seeking oxygen greedily.

"Gaha!?"

Syamaya doubled over in pain from the impact.

"Kyahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh, owwwwwwwwwww! I'm dying... I'm dying!!!!"

She rolled over back and forth, clutching her belly. "...Huh?" Renko began to frown.

"What the heck, you call this funny voice register a shout? Your verbal tic is very annoying. Then I'll give you so much pain you won't have the strength to scream--Argh, fuck this!"

Ruffling her soft sleek hair with both hands, Renko roared with displeasure.

"Enough... Enough! I really hate you. Unable to accept on a biological level. Despite experiencing the act of murder countless times, I've never known what's it's like to be killed. As a reward for your numerous kills, I wanted to hear your choice of song, how you want to be killed, but... Yeah, forget about it. I'll decide for you--Strangulation. Because I don't want to hear your disgusting voice. I'll crush your vocal cords and rip your neck to pieces, how's that? In that case, I can kill you quietly in peace... No no, no matter how I choose, if you die with just a crick-crack, even if I don't aim for the throat deliberately, there's still time to hear your death cry--"

"Eeeeeeeeeeeek!!!"

"Sheesh! That ear-splitting whistling... I get it. Then I'll smash your head with full strength. Since you hurt me in the head, let's get even, shall we~?"

Renko held up a lock of blood-red highlighted hair and bared her fangs savagely.

Syamaya frantically got up and swept her frightened gaze all around.

"......Ah."

Confirming the hatchet's location between herself and Renko, Syamaya's expression changed.

Lips curling in a grin, regaining her fighting spirit, Syamaya kicked the ground.

"DIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!"

Regaining the hatchet again, she swung down with full strength.

But Renko--

"Like I said, this kinda broken toy is useless on me."

She boldly caught the descending blade with both hands and suddenly exerted power.

Instantly, the steel blade cracked and shattered. "...Eh?" Holding just the remaining hilt, Syamaya made a sound resembling Maina.

As Syamaya spaced out, unable to understand what had happened, Renko raised her tattoo-covered right arm to muster enough strength to smash Syamaya's skull.

"Have a nice trip, Murderer Princess. Once you get to the other side, please get along with the victims, okay?"

The ice-blue eyes narrowed. The emerald eyes went shut tightly "...!?" Renko swung her arm, tearing through the air, about to smash Syamaya's head--

"Don't kill her!"

In that very instant.

A figure cut in between Renko and Syamaya.

" "......!?" "

Both girls stared wide-eyed. However, Renko's arm could not stop already. It was too late for an emergency stop as Renko's arm crashed towards the suddenly appearing figure--Kyousuke.

"Guahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

Using his arm to withstand Renko's arm that was capable of smashing metal, Kyousuke screamed. Unable to dissipate the impact, he was sent flying, falling on the ground. Maina and Eiri yelled.

"...Eh? K-Kyousuke...-kun, what are you doing--"

"Don't kill them, Renko! Don't, kill... Syamaya-senpai..."

Looking up with face all covered in greasy sweat, Kyousuke groaned.

Having taken Renko's hit, his right arm was swollen red. Not to the point of breaking bones, but there seemed to be two or three torn muscles in his arm. The pain was no joking matter.

Even so, Kyousuke still gritted his teeth and stood up, turning to plead with Renko.

"Please... stop it, Renko... Even if you don't kill Syamaya-senpai, she won't kill us anymore... So stop. Don't kill Syamaya-senpai!"

"--No!"

Faced with Kyousuke's earnest pleas, Renko made a sound like a willful child.

Pouting, Renko pointed at the dazed Syamaya.

"That bitch chopped my head with a hatchet, you know? She did it with full intent of killing me! And while I was teasing her, thinking if it'd be a good idea to activate the Unlimiter just in case it got too dangerous... She just chopped my head directly! This bitch... Not just to me but also Eiri and Maina--But worst of all, she even planned to kill you, the most important person to me! I can't forgive her for daring to touch you, the one I forbid anyone to kill apart from myself, absolutely unforgivable... Absolutely absolutely absolutely absolutely absolutely absolutely

absolutely absolutely absolutely unforgivable. So, no matter what you say, I have to slaughter her."

Renko threatened with a guttural voice that seemed almost about to boil over, glaring at Syamaya with eyes filled with murderous intent.

"Heeee!?"

Pierced by that blazing gaze, Syamaya huddled herself.

As Syamaya's teeth chattered and her eyes went moist, Renko mocked her:

"Oh my oh my... Are you truly preparing to be killed for the first time? Fufu. Isn't this nice, Murderer Princess? To be able to savor how your victims felt just before death arrived. Please share your experiences with them when you reach the other side, okay? Fufufu. Before you tried to kill me, you said... This is the shortcut to purgatory. This time, I'll send you on a super direct express train to hell--"

"Renko!"

Kyousuke roared at Renko as she reached towards Syamaya again.

Glaring at that beautiful face which was going "...What?", Kyousuke persuaded:

"Don't kill... Don't kill! If you kill Syamaya-senpai in front of me--if you kill anyone--I can't guarantee I can treat you the same as before. I'll surely hate you."

"------"

Hearing Kyousuke's words, Renko's face went expressionless.

"Kamiya-san..." Syamaya uttered in a daze. On the other hand, Renko's ice-blue eyes were widened fiercely to the max, then quietly and slowly... She bowed her head.

"......Fufu."

Her lips went twisted.

Vicious fangs were bared at the corner of her lips.

"Say, you do really think you can stop me, Kyousuke? You're really underestimating me. Indeed, I do love you, you know? I super love you! but I'm not so cheap that you can use my feelings as a shield to make me go "Okay, I understand" and follow obediently. Also, I don't quite enjoy people talking in the if you blah blah I'll hate you kind of manner~ Conversely, it might make me hate you, Kyousuke?"

"...No. That's not what I mean."

Enduring Renko's piercing eyes of disdain, Kyousuke tightened his fist.

--No problem. Renko is an upfront girl. As long as I accept her with sincerity, I can definitely convey my message to her. Kyousuke continued:

"I like you too, Renko. Not love but like. You're a wacky girl and I enjoy being around you. Even though I know you've killed before, I still think that. But... if I know who you've killed for real, once it feels 'real' to me, I'll probably start feeling repulsed by you. I'm sorry for deciding things on my own. But I... I still want to get along with you, to laugh with you. So please... I'm begging you, Renko! Don't make me hate you. What Syamaya-senpai did to us is water under the bridge. As long as you're still alive, that's enough already... So let things end, okay?"

"Yeah, I get it!"

"Huh?"

--An answer without hesitation.

Because she answered way too quickly, Kyousuke's comprehension could not keep up.

Renko turned around and ran towards the dumbstruck Kyousuke.

Her astoundingly beautiful face was showing a charming smile.

"Kyousuke!!! You're really quite something! I don't want to be hated by you... So let's confirm our love for each other from now on!!! Thanks to you, I survived safe and sound, are you happy? Hearing you say that, I'm really so happy!!! Ahhh, what's this melody, these feelings... Such pleasure!!! Too amazing, I can't bear it!!!! Seriously, seriously, I love you the most, Kyousuke! The melody played by your sincerity and honesty, I love it too! I love you!!! Kyousuke!!! I want to kill you right away!!!"

"...Huh? Anything but my life, okay... Say, that hurts!!!?"

Suddenly hugging him and rubbing her face all over him, Renko began to aggressively seek affection from him, making Kyousuke feel even more awkward. Although he was happy that his message reached her, he felt that something too much may have been conveyed.

"Oh, sorry sorry! I hurt you here right? As compensation, let me take off my bra, so that your favorite breasts can--"

Renko was saying all sorts of nonsense, but at least Kyousuke managed to stop her deadly insanity.

"Phew... Th-Thank goodness." Maina was drained. "...That girl should just go die already." Eiri glared at Renko. As for Syamaya...

"I-I'm saved... I, guess...?"

While murmuring, she collapsed on the ground and lost consciousness.

× × ×

"Hey... Why do I have to move this bitch?"

Under the faint moonlight, they were walking on the way back to school amidst shadows cast by trees.

Asked to carry the sleeping Syamaya, Renko sighed "shuko..."

"...It's the process of elimination. Maina and I are weak girls, you refused to let Kyousuke carry her. And it's your fault she fainted in the first place."

Walking next to Renko, Eiri yawned in boredom.

"Well, you have a point, but this bitch is so heavy, her perfume stinks and those uselessly large boobs are pressing against me, it's annoying... Can't we just dump her somewhere as long as no one finds out? By the way, Eiri, when I'm wearing the limiter, I'm just a weak girl like you two, you know?"

"...Weak? Are you sure you don't mean lewd instead? Don't go rejecting large boobs when you've got a pair of giant tits yourself. If you want to dump her, first start with dumping those two useless lumps of fat that are hanging on your chest as eyesores."

Eiri unleashed her harsh tongue with a displeased look, turning away from Renko.

With her face turned to the side, Kyousuke could see the corner of her lips relaxing.

It felt as though Eiri was also happy that Renko turned out fine.

Seeing the two of them bicker as usual, Kyousuke and Maina smiled wryly at the same time.

"Vitriolic best buds... So that's what they mean by that. Those two are quite a good combo."

"Ahaha. Yeah, a pair with such a good relationship. It's great--"

Maina watched Eiri and Renko's comedy duo routine intently.

While her eyes were filled with admiration, Kyousuke could also see faint feelings of loneliness.

Glancing at the side of Maina's face, Kyousuke tried to find the right words.

"......I really--hate myself."

Maina looked at her feet and spoke up.

In a voice filled with self-contempt, she murmured to no one in particular.

"Shallow thinking, poor reflexes, clueless, clumsy, small-minded, pessimistic... I'm full of bad points when I think about myself. Can't do anything right, the harder I try the bigger a mess I make... In the end, I'm always linked to bad results. Even that time, it was the same--"

Maina clenched her fist. Her voice was filled with sorrow and regret.

Recalling those painful memories, Maina continued in contrition.

"The lunchbox I made to please him ended up taking his life. Getting a ton of classmates caught up in addition to him... I think if I wasn't trying so hard, that kind of tragedy wouldn't have happened. If only I'm not present, then people around me won't get hurt, right? I've tried to kill myself many times, fifty times, but..."

--Whenever she recalled that one time, this happens, she said.

Her bitter face gradually showed a smile.

"After the total mess of a clumsy fit, I came back to my senses and rushed over to him... He still had a final breath. Although I was in complete panic, crying and sobbing... He smiled at me. Forcing himself to smile in spite of the pain, he tried to smile in order to comfort me, leaving behind the final words--'Thank you, it was delicious.' This was exactly the words I had been wanting to hear ever since I started making the lunchbox... And those were his final words too. I think he was showing a brave face and actually thought it tasted terrible. But to say something like that to me in that kind of situation... He smiled. So I resolved myself--I can't give up. I have to treasure my life. Even if it means making trouble for others, even if it means hardship and suffering in the future... I have to live on energetically to atone for my crimes."

Still sad, Maina's face stared straight ahead.

"When I found out that this school was not established for atonement, I was really shocked, but... Even so, I won't admit defeat! I have the same will as you, Kyousuke-kun. Not killing anyone, not getting killed by anyone, no matter how scary the future is, I will endure!"

Maina raised her fist up to her chest, full of spirit.

Actually, it was not entirely due to Kumumiya's gag order that Kyousuke and the others had not told Maina the truth.

They were also afraid. Afraid that what if Maina could not take the shock, then she might lose the drive to live on. But Maina...

"...Maina, you're very strong."

"...Eh?"

"You're very strong, Maina... Any ordinary person would surely have give up by now if they tried so hard and still couldn't succeed. After all, it's easier on themselves and doesn't cause people trouble. But you didn't do that, Maina. Whether for yourself or others, you chose the hard road. I can't say for sure if this choice is right, but I believe that you're really strong for choosing this path by your own will. Going forward bravely... So I want to cheer for you too."

"Eh!? Not at all... S-Someone like me... Auau."

"Show some confidence," Kyousuke said to the panicking Maina firmly.

"It's not just me, y'know!? Eiri as well and Renko... I'm sure the boy who ate your lunchbox also felt the same. It may be true that you have many bad points and things you're not good at, but Maina, you've also got other good points and charms that completely compensate for them. Rushing with selfless sacrifice towards someone about to kill you and even smiling at her, that's not something I'm able to do."

"Kyousuke-kun..."

"I'm sorry for hiding the truth of the school from you for so long. You're much stronger than we gave you credit for, Maina, much kinder as well. So don't worry. The smile that boy showed you... He definitely received your feelings. I dare guarantee. No matter how clumsy you are."

"……!?"

Maina's flaxen-colored eyes opened wide, turning round, as she looked up at Kyousuke.

Stopping in her tracks, with an astonished look--

"...Oh my!? What's wrong, you two? Standing there not moving."

"Awa!? N-N-N-N-Nut'n at all!"

The instant Renko called out, she bounced up.

Crying out randomly, Maina's face went bright red.

"U-Umm... Reelly, nut'n at all! Hawawa."

Muttering incomprehensibly, she tried to chase after Renko and Eiri who had gone quite a bit further ahead.

"Woahhhhhhhhhhhhh!?"

--She fell.

" "...Oh." " Renko and Eiri exclaimed.

Watching the predictable result, Kyousuke smiled wryly and held out his hand.

Although she should be able to get up on her own, even so, he still lent his hand to her.

"...If you receive help like this, it'll be easier, right? I will try my best to become your strength, Maina. Pull yourself up after falling and advance with resilience."

"Ah... Y-Yeah! Fankyu velly much... Kyousuke-kun."

Maina timidly held his hand, her face getting redder and redder.

Bowing her head in escape, she said politely:

"Renko-chan, Eiri-chan... Can... I try my best too?"

Hearing Maina ask that, Kyousuke went "...Hmm?" in puzzlement.

"Trying your best... Aren't you trying your best already? Why do you have to ask those two?"

"Eh!? Oh... No, nothing! What I said wasn't referring to that. It's just my own mutterings... A-Anyway, nut'n at all! Please forget about it!"

Shaking her head, Maina started walking again.

Gripping Kyousuke's hand tightly, she rapidly walked.

"Huh? H-Hey... What are you doing, going so fast suddenly--"

"Like I said, nut'n at all! Itsh nut'n!"

Seeing Maina getting flustered for no reason at all, Kyousuke was baffled.

Seeing the two of them walk, holding hands, Renko pressed her palm on her forehead with a "shuko..."

"Sigh. Eiri, looks like there's another rival, eh?"

"...Huh?" Eiri glared at Renko's gas mask.

"What do you mean? I don't get you... I'm totally not interested in that kind of indecisive and shameless pervert. You girls can compete all you want, okay? It's just that, well..."

--Just one more would be fine, but...

Eiri's annoyed, narrowed eyes were staring behind Renko.

Long lashes hanging down, that dignified face suddenly collapsed and started to purr, making a voice as sweet as a cat's.

"Mmm~ How splendid... Truly beautiful... Ufufufufu."

Closing Ceremony - Outroduction

"I-It's over~~..."

On the way from the gym back to the dorms, Kyousuke stretched.

The three-day-two-night open-jail school had ended at 19:00 just now. Currently, it was shortly after all the arrived first-years had gathered in the gym to attend the simple Closing Ceremony held by the teachers and the Discipline Committee.

Maina was walking inside the school lit by mercury-vapor lamps, sighing "phew~"

"So dead tired... What a terrible open-jail school event."

"...Yawn. Yeah."

Kyousuke's group had arrived at school before dawn.

Because they had arrived earliest of all the first-years, they should have gotten plenty of rest, but actually... For the past half a day until now, they had not slept. Cleaning up various matters was truly suffering.

After all, Kyousuke and his friends had been attacked by the Discipline Committee Chair Syamaya, almost resulting in a tragedy.

Busy with interrogations all this time, it was already time for the closing ceremony by the time they noticed.

Renko combed her hand through her hair that was back to being completely silver, laughing "foosh."

"It is tired, but I'm very happy too, you know? Bob and Chihiro also returned safely, wonderful wonderful. Then this brings about a conclusion."

"Yeah, but in the end, it looks like Shinji's group didn't make it..."

Only roughly half of the first-years managed to get back on time.

The remaining students were then forcefully retrieved by the upper year students and apparently punished harshy. For the second and third-year students, this was

a special course named Hunting the Escaped Prisoners where they earned points according to how many students they caught.

Also, although it was Monday today, there were no classes and they were given two days to rest. Hence, while the hunted students were suffering from consequences, the other students could rest and recuperate in leisure.

Kyousuke's group was totally tired and desired rest as soon as possible. A cheerful voice was heard behind them.

"Thank you for your hard work at the open-jail school, everyone!"

Stopping, they turned around.

Standing under the lighting at night was--

"Th-Thank you too... Syamaya-senpai."

Smiling like an angel, the Discipline Committee Chair--Syamaya Saki.

However, her whole body was wrapped in bandages. Her soft, honey-colored hair was loose, her emerald eye was covered by an eyepatch while the uniform on her body was tattered all over.

These were signs of disciplining under Kurumiya's hands. Even though it was a trade school for training professional killers, it was only natural for students to be punished for trying to kill other students without authorization.

Dragged away as soon as they reached the school, Syamaya had not attended the closing ceremony. Although her expression was very cheerful, the many cuts and bruises on her face looked painful to watch.

Faced with the silent Kyousuke's group, Syamaya smiled "ufufu."

"Next, I'll still have to undergo a discipline sesson all night long? But that cannot be helped for I have committed such a serious crime... As the Discipline Committee Chair, I should not have made such an embarrassment of myself. I am truly sorry for causing you all trouble."

Syamaya straightened her posture and bowed impeccably.

"...Hmph." Eiri crossed her arms.

"...Can't stand it. Thanks to you, we really had a lot of trouble. We haven't taken a bath or had any rest yet. If you think an apology is enough for us to forgive you, stop being so naive--"

"Well then, Akabane-san. What must I do for you to forgive me?"

Instantly, Syamaya closed in next to Eiri.

Eiri went "Kyah!?" and looked up. Her shoulder caught by Syamaya, she stared.

"What must I do for you? A bath together to cleanse your body? Or how about a lovely night of passion sharing the same bed... Ha~ Ha~"

"Eeeek!? This... D-Don't touch me! All rejected! You perverted freak!"

"Ufufu. I find this forceful attitude very cute too! Although we were in conflict once, having understood your true face, I feel like smiling so much. Please rest assured. I won't leak your secret to anyone. Conversely, allow me to help you make sounds of ●●... Ha~ Ha~"

"Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeek!"

" " "....." " "

Syamaya seemed to like Eiri very much. As Syamaya salivated uncontrollably, chasing after Eiri, Maina blocked her way, going "awawa."

"Syamaya-senpai! No, don't do that... Eiri-chan is already tired!"

"...Ara? Ara ara, my apologies. Ufufufufu. I couldn't help myself and lost control by accident. But you're very cute too, Igarashi-san! It makes me want to protect you, make me unable to leave you behind. Ufufu, so cute..."

"Uweh!?"

As Syamaya stroked her head back and forth, Maina went frozen with fright.

Syamaya seemed to like Maina too. Unconcerned that Maina's eyes had turned to swirling spirals, Renko stood in front of the docile Syamaya and sighed "shuko..."

"Oh my oh my, what a pain. This chick wanted to kill us originally but her heart ended up getting stolen by us. Oh my~ I give up. I give up--"

"Kyahhhhhhhhhhh!!!!"

As soon as Renko approached, Syamaya flipped over backwards and fell on her ass.

Pointing at Renko with a trembling finger, she said in an exremely frightened voice:

"M-M-M-M-M-Monster... Too scary. Please don't get within a meter's radius of me! Please don't point that gas mask at me!"

"------"

Syamaya seemed to have acquired a pure impression of fear towards Renko.

Faced with the overt change in attitude, Renko began to get angry with a "shuko!"

"Eiri and Maina are fine but I'm not? That's pissing me off! I knew it, I should have slaughtered you, Syamaya-chan... Also, how about tormenting you to death and back again?"

Escaping from Renko, Syamaya hid behind Kyousuke's back.

Kyousuke tried to smooth things over and persuade the increasingly angry Renko:

"It can't be helped, right? Almost getting killed like that, anyone would be scared..."

...That's why, almost killed himself, Kyousuke was also very scared of Syamaya who was hiding behind his back.

Caught in between Renko and Kyousuke, Maina became flustered.

Just as Kyousuke alternated his gaze between Renko and Syamaya, stuck in a dilemma...

"Kyah, so scary... so scary~~, Kyousuke-sama~~~~~!"

" " " "Eh." " " "

Speaking in a sweet voice, Syamaya hugged Kyousuke from behind.

The extremely sudden action caused everyone to blink repeatedly.

"Umm... Syamaya-senpai!? What are you doing so suddenly... Besides, what's with the '-sama'?"

--What the fuck, -sama?

Syamaya rubbed her face affectionately against Kyousuke's back.

"Yes, Kyousuke-sama. I have fallen head over heels in love with you for stepping forward just when I was about to be killed. You are such a kind and brave person! I said once... 'The instant just prior to death is when all sorts of true natures will be revealed' But standing at death's doorstep, the true nature you revealed was truly beautiful, utterly splendid! Also, you're the Mass Murderer of Twelve, which makes you a match made in heaven for me, the Murderer Princess of Twenty-one Victims! I want to understand you even more... I want to witness your ●● face."

"------"

Seeing Syamaya lean against him with glimmering eyes, Kyousuke was silent.

After sweeping his gaze around to look for help, he could only see...

"Isn't it nice to be so popular? Hmph... Just go die already."

"Awawawawa. Even Syamaya-senpai, towards Kyousuke-kun... No, I won't admit defeat!"

"Yeah, just kill. Better to just kill her. Or I'll ask Kurumiya-san to have her slaughtered. How dare she make a move on my Kyousuke... Be prepared to get killed, okay? Foosh."

Eiri stared at her fingernails, grumbling unhappily.

Maina covered her mouth then clenched her hands tightly in front of her chest.

The eyepieces of Renko's gas mask flashed, giving off some kind of dangerous presence...

Feeling Syamaya's softness on his back, Kyousuke broke out in cold sweat.

--I'm totally surrounded by deadly danger on all sides.

Feeling inexplicably crushed by heavy pressure, Kyousuke looked up at the sky to escape.

In the cloudless deep blue sky of the night, stars covered the vast expanse above.

Under this same sky, his thoughts went to his most beloved little sister who was still waiting for Kyousuke to return home even now.

(Hey Ayaka... Are you living okay? I'll surely find a way. In spite of these weirdos hanging around me, in spite of the deadly risks every once in a while... Even so, I will surely return. Wait for me, Ayaka. Be a good girl, okay?)

--He muttered to himself.

A person of strong character whether outside or inside the house, Ayaka's sense of jealousy was unexpectedly intense. If she were to find out that Kyousuke was currently surrounded by so many beauties, who knew how she would react?

Kyousuke wondered, lost in these kinds of thoughts...

Day 0 Fall From Heaven - Secret Track

Two months earlier, back in the beginning part of May...

On that day, Kamiya Ayaka was in excellent spirits.

With radiant spring sunlight scattered across the ground and a warm breeze blowing, birds were singing under the shade of trees, as though offering their blessings to Ayaka as she left the house.

"Really wanna see you really wanna see you really wanna see you immediately~ ♪"

Singing a song that rivaled pop songs, she skipped lightly along the way.

A great deal of time had already passed since the last time she went to school, walking along this path. Dressed in a middle school uniform, feeling slightly embarrassed, Ayaka chuckled. --Happy, so happy.

Right now, Ayaka was in an excellent mood, ignoring all the pedestrians along the way.

"If you really wanna see someone, all you need to do is go to them... Ayaka is so silly."

Making fun of her own lyrics, she chuckled coldly. Seriously, this world was filled with fools.

But precisely because of that, the converse was also true--Magnificent and refined things were precious and irreplaceable.

--Don't wanna lose you. Thinking that, Ayaka went along her way.

Going "really wanna see you" repeatedly, rather than simply waiting, she was going "to see him" by her own will, walking on her own two feet. Heading off to that world by the side of her most beloved...

"Really wanna see you immediately Really wanna see you really wanna see you~ ♪"

Switching up the lyrics randomly, she passed through the shopping street from the train station, entering a side road from the main street, crossing through gaps behind alleyways and residential neighborhoods--Finally arriving at her destination.

Seirei Private Girls School.

Passing through the deserted school gates, she walked to the deserted entrance to the school building.

Although she passed by the tennis courts along the way where classmates dressed in gym clothes were having class, those students were not in Ayaka's homeroom. Glancing sideways at them, Ayaka continued on her way.

Taking off her loafers at the entrance of the school building, she prepared to change into indoor shoes.

"……!?"

She held her breath. Ayaka's indoor shoes--Gone.

An intense wave of nausea surged. Her heart raced. A hated word flashed in her mind.

--Even so, she immediately understood that this was worrying for nothing. Opening the shoe locker, she found someone else's shoe stuffed inside.

(Oh right... After advancing to the next year, the homeroom changed.)

Accepting this fact, Ayaka was struck by a new question.

Which homeroom in the second year was she now? She did not know which classroom to go to.

Having stopped going to school during the second school term in the first year, Ayaka had not checked the homeroom announcements.

But there was no need to go out of her way to make a trip to the office...

"--Oh well, whatever. Yes. As long as there's more than twelve people, any class will do."

Ayaka nodded, walking in the corridor without wearing shoes. In her hand was a rectangular carrying case--A black hard-shelled case used for containing musical instruments.

Ayaka happily lugged the rugged case that did not match her petite body at all, continuing to walk forward on a path of no return without looking back at all.

"...Okay, it's decided! Let's do this class."

Climbing up the stairs, turning around a corner in the corridor, Ayaka whistled as she entered the nearest washroom.

The current time was 11:09 when third period was in progress. In any case, no should be coming in.

Even so, Ayaka still entered a stall and locked it securely.

"Okay... Let's start preparing properly!"

Placing the case on top of the toilet, she opened it.

Taking out the components that were packed inside in an orderly fashion, she hummed a song while assembling them together.

In Ayaka's heart, it would be no exaggeration to call him her "everything". Six months had passed since he was mercilessly taken away, without warning, suddenly...

For some reason, the parents overseas on a business trip could not be contacted at all. During this time without any family, Ayaka locked herself in his room, crying all alone, searching tirelessly.

Simply searching for a way to see him again, searching, searching, searching

see you so wanna see you so wanna see you even if it means going to the farthest reaches of hell I must see you~ ♪"

With quick and lively steps, singing a song in a whisper, she walked--

"....."

She stopped under a sign that read "Year 2 Class 1".

Ayaka firmed the rising song of determination playing in her heart.

"Hoo... Haa..." Putting her hand on the door, she took a deep breath.

Only one chance. Failure was not an option. Still, Ayaka wanted to see him, she wanted to see him no matter what. Wanting to see him. For this purpose, she would do anything.

--No matter what it takes, it will be done.

Hence, Ayaka suppressed her worries and poured her thoughts into her actions.

"Right now, Ayaka will chase after you... Onii-chan."

While making her oath, she violently opened the door with all her might.

The crashing sound of the door made the entire classroom silent.

"Kamiya... -san...? You, why--"

A female teacher with an ordinary face and pushing forty in age: Takanashi-sensei who taught modern Japanese, the teacher who had looked after Ayaka during Year 1 of middle school. There were also plenty of familiar faces among the students.

Everyone present showed a look of puzzlement, staring at Ayaka, staring at the object in Ayaka's hands. What on earth was that? Perhaps none of them could understand in an instant.

--A 12-gauge 9-shot Browning semi-automatic shotgun.[3]

Even if they understood, it was probably impossible for them to accept.

While everyone's minds were frozen, Ayaka's "masterpiece" was already accomplished.

Smiling with incomparable radiance, she aimed at the nearest target--a girl in black-framed glasses, staring at Ayaka while holding a pencil over an open notebook--pointing the barrel at her.

"...I'm sorry? Ayaka must see Onii-chan no matter what. That's why Ayaka must do the same thing as Onii-chan. For Ayaka's sake... Please die."

Without any hesitation, she pressed the trigger.

[3] 9-shot: probably a reference to the modified Browning Auto-5 that was used in the Tsuyama massacre in 1938.

Afterword - Master of Ceremonies

The fact that you're reading this afterword means that PSYCOME Volume 2 is already on sale in bookstores. Hello again, or maybe for the first time, I am Mizushiro Mizuki.

Just as the the title "Murderer Princess and Open-Jail School" implies, Volume 2 is a story that takes place on the stage of an open-air or outdoor school. There are many love and comedy elements. That's why this story is a love comedy.

That being said, I'll share a secret that the plot was unfortunately censored by editorial orders halfway for going too far. Meanwhile, an editorial stop was also issued to the illustrations for being "too erotic", anyway--

That's pretty much the feeling with which PSYCOME Volume 2 is presented. I'd be gratified if it succeeded in entertaining you a bit.

As a side note, what I had the most fun in was making the guidebook. Even though I went as far as to put in shirt folding instructions, in the end, it couldn't be published. Also, there's the SATSUJIN RAP and stuff like that.

Okay. Since this afterword is on the final page again, here's a torrent of thanks. Editor Gibu-sama, illustrator Namanie-sama, Musicago Graphics for doing the design, everyone in advertising, friends, family, relatives, as well as everyone from various industries involved with helping this book's publishing, all the readers who read the previous volume, and finally, you whom I am most grateful for holding this book in your hands:

Truly, thank you very much! I expect to present the next volume to you during summer.

Mizushiro Mizuki ~listening to BMTH while writing~

引き続き挿絵担当
生煮えです。
3巻楽しみですね。
女の子と猟銃
ギャップ萌え。